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"YOU MUSN'T STAND THERE, MY GOOD GIRL; IT'S AWFULLY DANGEROUS IN A STORM LIKE THIS!" SAID DENIS AINSLIE, CHIDINGLY.

## FROM OVER THE SEA.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

GREENHEATH was a picturesque old village, beautifully situated in the very heart of one of the midland shires; prosperity and content seemed the lot of the pretty little place, and no one driving through its rural lanes or wandering over the broad common, to which it owed its name, would ever have guessed that not five miles off was a hideous manufacturing town, full of smoke and aqualor and poverty, for though the proprietors of the great works at Milltown did their best for the good of their hands, whenever a large quantity of people are brought together from all parts of the country there must be idlers and vagabonds side by side with the striving and industrious.

Only five miles apart at their farthest distance, actually joining at one point, Greenheath and

Milltown had as little intercourse as well could be.

Greenheath was all the property of Mr. Lancelot Bright, a squire of the most conservative type, who thought it the greatest possible liberty that anyone should have dared to build factories and mills so near him.

Milltown was a pushing Radical place which looked down upon the pretty peaceful village. The "hands" at Milltown loved to flock into Greenheath for summer evening walks and Bank Holiday picnics, but the squire's objections to them were so well known that very few cottagers were bold enough to accommodate them with hot water and the other requisites for out-door teas, in fact, between the people of the two places there reigned not so much an open feud as a long standing smothered hostility, which seemed ready to break into active warfare at any moment.

Mr. Bright was not a popular man; a good landlord, as far as essentials went, but a tyrannical master in small things, and one who never seemed able to unbend and enter into the feelings of the simple country folks, but then Lancelot Bright was in parliament, and so was kept away from Greenheath for weeks at a time

by his political duties, and if he was not popular his wife and children were beloved by every human creature in the village.

The Squire had no son; people said it was the grief of his life, the cause of his gloomy face and austere manner, but he never lamented the fact to wife or friend. He was very fond of the two girls, Cynthia and Loveday, and as the entail over the estate, though strict, did not exclude females, Cynthia could inherit everything, while their mother's fortune would make Loveday, if not an heiress, at least, anything but a portionless damsel.

It was August, Mr. Bright had been released from attendance at Westminster, and had been a week at the Priory. Very soon the house would be filled with guests for the slaughter of the partridges.

Lady Katherine Bright sat in her pretty boudoir with the two girls, an unusually anxious look on her pleasant face.

"What can your father want to say to you, Loveday!" she repeated, for about the tenth time after a message had come that Mr. Bright wished to see Miss Loveday in the library at

twelve. "I think he might just as well have told us at breakfast."

Loveday shook her pretty little head, which was covered with the diupest curls of golden brown hair, which would stray over her broad white forehead.

"I haven't the faintest idea, mother," she said. "I certainly haven't been doing anything dreadful. I can't call to mind a single offence against the Squire's rigid laws of etiquette as laid down for his family's guidance."

"Loveday!" said Cynthia, gravely, "don't!"

"Don't what?" asked the younger girl, lightly. "You and mother are so desperately tragic, you'd frighten me into fits if I didn't try to be careless. Papa doesn't often 'send' for either of us in this imperious fashion, but when he does it usually means he is angry. I quite expect him to be angry to-day, but, I repeat, I haven't the least idea why."

The squire was rather a martinet in his family; fond as he was of the girls, there was a little dread mingling with their affection for him. Cynthia was his favourite; she was like her mother in face, and had Mr. Bright's own proud bearing. Loveday he usually treated as a child, though she was turned eighteen.

Lady Katherine, despite her pleasant face and kindly smile, was not a happy woman. She had married Lancelot Bright, loving him with every fibre of her heart, only to find he gave her nothing but a cold placid affection in return.

He was attentive to her wishes in small things, thoughtful for her comfort, but he never consulted her, never confided in her. She knew as little of his inner thoughts and feelings as a stranger, while his past life before, at thirty-five, he came into his uncle's property, was a sealed book to her. She knew that people were wrong in describing his gloom to a fruitless desire for a son. He had seemed pleased rather than disappointed that each of the children proved a girl, but Katherine kept her own counsel.

She felt certain some secret care weighed heavily on her husband's mind, but she would not try to discover what he kept from her, and never, even to her children, did she hint that his strange reserve troubled her.

They were great contrasts these two sisters. Cynthia, the heiress of Greenheath, was twenty-two, a bright, sparkling brunette, with her mother's regular features, her father's flashing dark eyes and haughty brow. Loveday was a small, clinging creature, with eyes as blue as sapphires, hair of a real golden brown, and the prettiest air of timidity. No one seeing the two girls would have dreamed the younger had really the firmer character of the two, and that in spite of her childish ways Loveday had the soul of a noble, patient woman.

"Now," she said, rising as the clock pointed to three minutes to twelve. "I'm off. There's nothing the squire hates so much as to be kept waiting. Mother, dear, I'm trembling like a leaf and feel quite ready to sink into my shoes. If I shouldn't come back safe and sound in—well, let us say half-an-hour—do come and look for me."

She was gone. Somehow the pretty room seemed to have lost its sunshine for the mother, when Loveday left it, she turned to Cynthia with an anxious glance.

"Don't worry, mamma," said the girl, reassuringly. "I daresay it's nothing at all. You know its papa's way to be formal, perhaps he wants to ask Loveday what she'd like for a present, you know it's her birthday next week."

But Lady Katherine shook her head and utterly refused to accept this prosaic explanation.

"Loveday and I were driving yesterday, and we went through Milltown. I suppose your father is not annoyed at that?"

"Hardly," said Cynthia, cheerfully, "though what could take you through that odious place I can't imagine. I hate the very sight of it."

Lady Katherine sighed.

"Do you know, Cynthia, that when I was first married, I thought Milltown's being so near my new home, a most delightful coincidence."

Miss Bright opened her eyes in bewilderment.

"Mamma, you couldn't have known what it was like."

"No, my dear; but my greatest friend had married and settled there. Lucy and I had been schoolfellows and inseparable companions; she was a year older than I, and I was still at school when she married. I could not understand why she never wrote to tell me of her engagement, or why the first I heard of the wedding was reading its announcement in the papers. When I 'came out' a year later, I heard the story. Lucy Denvers had married against the wishes of all her family, a plain business man, not rich enough for his wealth to blind them to his lack of birth, not poor enough for his inability to keep a wife to make their union impossible. Sir John Denvers gave Lucy her choice; if she was determined to marry Mr. Ainslie when she came of age she might as well do so at once. To save scandal he would allow the wedding to be from his house; but when once it was accomplished he should look on her as no longer his daughter, and she must never expect any more notice from her own family."

Cynthia looked as if she could not believe her ears.

"Why, Sir Alfred Denvers and his wife have stayed with us over and over again, and never went to Milltown to see the Ainslies."

"No, my dear; Sir John's decrees have been carried out by his son. When I married I hoped, being so near, I might renew my old acquaintance with Lucy."

"And didn't you?" asked Cynthia, regretting the question when she saw the shadow on her mother's face.

"I never saw her again," said Lady Katherine.

"The first five years after our marriage we travelled incessantly from place to place without ever coming home to Greenheath; your father seemed to have taken a positive dislike to the Priory, and would not come here even for a day. At last I had a long illness, and the doctor said I must return to England, and spend some months quietly in the country. To please me, because I had a kind of fancy my child would die if it was born anywhere but at Greenheath, your father at last came home."

"And Mrs. Ainslie, surely she called?"

"She called. I was ill and not allowed to see her. Your father told me he would have no intimacy. I could leave cards if I liked, but there it must end. It was a great grief to me. I pictured Lucy hurt, and thinking I had forgotten her; but I need not have wondered how I should explain matters; while you were only a few days old she died."

Cynthia looked amazed.

"But there is a Mrs. Ainslie. I have seen her name in subscription lists. I have seen her driving in a very gorgeous carriage, a showy, vulgar woman."

"Mr. Ainslie married again very soon. I know nothing of his present wife except that she has no children of her own, and is said to be devoted to Lucy's son. The Ainslies have risen step by step in these years. He is a millionaire and has been offered a peerage. I suppose this is almost the only house for miles where the family would not be received as equals."

"Papa always calls them upstarts. He says Denis, the son is the most insufferable prig he ever met."

"I daresay," Lady Katherine sighed, "your father is a very prejudiced man."

Cynthia undertook the Squire's defence.

"I think he's right in that," she said, gravely. "Denis Ainslie is not our equal. He goes into general society, but I shouldn't consider him a gentleman. Why he's been all through his father's works. After he left college he insisted on going in as a hand and working his way up. Then, he associates with the workpeople just as though they were his equals, and speaks at Radical meetings and all kinds of horrid places. I think papa is quite right to dislike him and to say he is not a gentleman."

"Have you ever spoken to Denis Ainslie, dear?"

"Never, and I don't want to; I hate associating with inferior people."

Lady Katherine dropped the subject, and took

up another she hoped would prove more harmonious.

"Has your father told you he had a letter yesterday from Lord Marchmont? It seems the squire asked him here for the shooting."

"And is he coming?" There was just the faintest blush on Cynthia's cheeks; she did not love the viscount, indeed, at this time of her life, Miss Bright did not believe in love, deeming it an idle sentiment unworthy of the classes, still, Lord Marchmont was one of the most distinguished men she knew; his wife would share an honoured name, and he was a leader of fashion. Cynthia was ambitious, and she was quite willing to become that wife.

"I don't know," said her mother quietly; "your father was interrupted as he was telling me about it. I like Lord Marchmont very much. Is not Loveday a long time, Cynthia?"

"It is a quarter to one," said the heiress, glancing rather reluctantly at the clock; "she can't possibly be with papa all this time. Shall I go and see if she is in her room?"

Lady Katherine shook her head.

"I will go to the library; the interview with papa must be over but I wonder Loveday did not come in and tell us about it."

Lady Katherine crossed the broad hall, went down a long passage, and entered a room at its further end, to find the squire pacing the room with angry steps, while Loveday, on a low chair by the table, was crying as if her heart would break.

Lady Katherine was a submissive wife, but this scene tried her beyond her powers. Loveday was her youngest, her favourite child, and the sight of that bitter grief gave her courage to resent her husband's treatment of their daughter, though she would never have questioned his treatment of herself.

"Lancelot," she cried indignantly, "what's the matter? I am sure Loveday can't have done anything as terrible as you need make her cry like this."

The squire's face was black with anger.

"I daresay you think so; she has disappointed every hope of my heart, she has set my wishes at defiance and utterly refused to obey me, and you call that nothing. You can go now," and he turned to the sobbing girl, "and try to come to your senses; stay here, Katherine, I have a great deal to say to you. Understand, Loveday, you are to go straight to your own room, and not mention a word of our conversation to your sister."

Lady Katherine bent and kissed the flushed, tearful face.

"I will come to you soon, dear."

"That's just like you," cried the squire irritably, as the door closed leaving him alone with his wife, "you dispute my will at every turn."

"You know that is not true, Lancelot," she answered gently. "I may not always guess your wishes, and you never confide them to me; it is hard to be expected to divine things."

"When you have finished your complaints, perhaps you will be good enough to listen to me," he said sullenly.

No one ever thought Lancelot Bright a good-tempered man now; in his youth he had been noted for his high spirits, his generosity, his reckless expenditure. He had sown plenty of his wild oats before he met Lady Katherine, but he had no mercy now on the short-comings of other people, a hard, narrow-minded man with plenty of prejudice and self-will; a man who ruled those beneath his sway well and wisely, but with a rod of iron; such was the master of Greenheath now, and his poor wife often wondered how she could have worshipped him so trustingly, for the real Lancelot Bright was utterly unlike the ideal of her girlhood's days.

"I am waiting," she said gently, "please tell me what you want quickly for I am anxious to go to Loveday."

"To encourage her in defying me, no doubt," returned the squire, too angry to know exactly what he said. "I'm sure I feel almost distracted, but I never expect any sympathy."

"If only you would trust me more," said his wife, wistfully, "but you never tell me any thing."



"I am going to tell you plenty now, maybe before I've finished you'll wish I hadn't. Have you forgotten I heard from Lord Marchmont yesterday?"

"No—is he coming here for the shooting?"

"He *was* coming; he won't show his face at Greenheath if that spoilt child of yours has her way. I should like to know what fault Loveday finds with him; he's one of the most promising young fellows I ever met; he's an honest, true-hearted gentleman; he can give her great wealth, an old title, and he's over head and ears in love with her."

He paused just from want of breath. Lady Katherine was thankful to get in a word.

"Do you mean that Lord Marchmont wants to marry *Loveday*, I thought it was Cynthia he admired."

"So did I, and so it would have been if he'd had good taste, but it's *Loveday*, worse luck."

"I wonder how he made the mistake?"

"Well, the two girls are always together, and he was with one as much as the other: I looked on *Loveday* as a child, besides, who could dream of a man preferring her to her sister? but I was wrong for once, it's *Loveday*. He writes me a very good, honest letter, you can read it for yourself."

Lady Katherine did read it and liked it extremely. Lord Marchmont wrote that he could not accept Mr. Bright's invitation without telling him his chief object in coming to Greenheath was to meet *Loveday*; if she could not give him any hope of ultimately winning her, or if her father thought his cause hopeless, he would prefer to spare himself the pain of daily intercourse with her.

There was a hint that he was sure of his mother's warm approval, that he was prepared to make any settlements Mr. Bright thought fit, and asked and desired no portion with his bride. It was a good letter, and it touched Lady Katherine's heart as her husband, watching her face while she read it, soon discovered.

"Well," he asked, impatiently, "is that a lover to despise?"

"What does she say?"

"She's as obstinate as a mule. She says she does not love Lord Marchmont, and she won't marry him. Just as though any well-conducted girl would fall in love with a man before he proposed to her."

"I'm afraid I did," said his wife with a strange smile; "at least, I cared for you long before you asked me to marry you."

Mr. Bright took no notice of this.

"I've reasoned with *Loveday*," he went on, "I've argued with her. I tell her that if she likes Lord Marchmont *now* she will certainly love him soon. I've told her he'd be content to wait till then; and that if she cares for no one else her heart must turn to him; but I might as well have knocked my head against a stone. Then I appealed to her feelings for us; but I don't believe she has any."

"She has only too much," said the mother, indignantly; "but, Lancelot, though I grant it is a brilliant offer, and we could trust our child to Lord Marchmont willingly, I can't see why it is so necessary she should accept him. She is not nineteen. She has a happy home. If anything happened to us to-morrow she would be well provided for. Why are you so anxious to lose her?"

Lancelot Bright looked at his wife with a dull red flush on his cheeks.

"If anything happened to me, Katherine, *Loveday* would be a beggar. I have kept it from you in kindness; but, perhaps, I was mistaken. The company in which your fortune was invested failed last year, and every penny of it was lost."

She bore the news very bravely.

"I shan't be ashamed to owe everything to you," she said, gently.

The words touched him, and seemed to charm away his anger. He was not a man given to caresses; but he stooped and kissed her.

"Heaven knows, Katy, all I have I only value for your sake and the children's. I may as well tell you all now. I have been saving for years to add to *Loveday's* portion, to leave both my girls a token of their father's love, and only last week

I heard my savings had gone the way of your dowry, lost—lost beyond recovery."

"Even then, dear, your income is a large one," said his wife, "and if anything takes you surely you can't think Cynthia would grudge *Loveday* and me a share of her house?"

Mr. Bright answered with something like a groan.

"Cynthia would grudge nothing; but, Katy, I can't explain, only when Marchmont's letter came, I felt as a shipwrecked mariner must feel at sight of land; and now to have all my hopes dashed to the ground by a girl's caprice."

"I will speak to *Loveday*," said Lady Katherine. "I will do my best, Lance; but I have very little hope. She cares nothing for wealth or rank. She is such a simple, childish creature, I fear the advantages of Lord Marchmont's offer would not weigh with her at all."

"But you'll try—you'll do your best?"

"I will indeed. Let me go to her now. Poor child, how miserable she looked!"

Left alone, Lancelot Bright shot the bolt of his study door, buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

"She is almost an angel"—he was thinking of his wife—"and I have deceived and tricked her all these years. She says I do not confide in her. How can I when I remember the awful secret I am keeping from her. I meant to tell her to-day, but I could not get out the words. She would despise me so utterly. I couldn't tell her. She will learn it soon enough, poor thing, unless by any strange chance I live to be a hundred, and that isn't likely. Barker tells me to keep quiet and avoid all worry and shocks. Little he guesses the sword suspended over my head which may fall at any moment."

## CHAPTER II.

FAR, far away from old England, with more than six thousand miles of ocean between his native land and the home he had made for himself, dwelt an old man, called Caleb Morton.

He had been one of the earliest settlers in the colony of Martinstown. He had arrived there a lad of nineteen, with a small capital of fifteen pounds, and he had prospered till he was almost the richest man in the small community, and was certainly the leading spirit of the place.

His prosperity, however, had come about very gradually. The earlier years were full of hard struggles, he had a young sister to support, and though she married at nineteen, her husband was one of those numerous people who never can "get on," and Caleb might have had the family hanging like a millstone round his neck for the rest of his life had not death stepped in and claimed the young wife, after which her husband declared he could not stay in Martinstown, but must return to England and his own people.

Mr. Morton had never honestly liked the man who had married his sister after a very brief engagement, and he was not sorry to say good-bye to him; but, though an old bachelor, he had a warm affection for the year-old child his Mary had left behind.

The baby was regarded by its father as a burden and unmitigated nuisance, and though Caleb was then far from rich, the bargain was soon struck. At any rate, for the present, little Owen should remain in his uncle's care; when Mr. Bright had made his fortune he could send for his son.

He never had sent. Nearly thirty years had passed away, and nothing had ever been heard at Martinstown of the gay, handsome young Englishman. The general opinion in the colony was either that Mr. Bright had sunk so low he did not care to communicate with those who had known him in better days or else that he must be dead.

Caleb Morton, trying to recall all he had ever heard of his brother-in-law's family, could only decide that Bright had been an orphan without brother or sister. An uncle had paid his expenses to the colony, and gave him five hundred pounds to start in life with, from which it was to be augured this relative was a rich man; but nothing else was known about him, and on returning

to England, Mr. Bright, had never mentioned what his future plans were.

It mattered very little while Owen was a child, or even a schoolboy, but as he grew up his anxiety about his home-history was very great.

He was a handsome, intelligent young fellow, the pride of his uncle's heart.

Mr. Morton intended to make him his heir, he looked on Owen as his son in all but name, and he could not understand the young fellow's hankering to know something of the father who had (in plain language) deserted him.

"He was a gentleman," said the colonist sharply, "but he didn't behave as one. The least he could have done would be to write to me. I paid his passage to England, I gave him a good sum of money to land with, and common gratitude ought to have made him write to me."

Owen winced.

"I know he treated you badly," he admitted, "but I want to find out what has become of him."

"Why can't you let sleeping dogs lie," enquired his uncle irritably, "bless my soul, Owen, you'll never hear any good of that fellow, I can't help saying it; though he is your own father, he was a coward and an idler, you are better off without him."

Owen hesitated, but there was between him and his uncle the most complete confidence and after a moment he said, gravely,—

"It's not for what I expect to gain from him I am anxious to know the truth, but don't you see, Uncle Caleb, from your description my father wasn't very likely to 'get on'; if I can find him he'll be in poverty, perhaps worse. Thanks to you I enjoy everything money can buy, and I can't bear the idea that while I live as it were in luxury, my own father is perhaps starving."

"But what could you do," asked Mr. Morton, really touched. "Bright is such a common name, you might as well look for a needle in a hayfield, as seek a man called Bright in London."

"Bright may be a common name," said Owen, "but Lancelot is not. I don't want to leave you uncle, I've not the slightest wish to go to England, but I should like to make some enquiries about my father."

"I've one cousin left in the old country," said Caleb; "he's a bit older than me, but we were school fellows together, and though I haven't written to him for years, I'll send him a letter by the next mail, asking if he could advise me how to trace a man called Lancelot Bright, who left this colony twenty-nine years ago and has never been heard of since."

"You won't tell him—about me."

"Not I, lad. Why if your fears are right, and your father is in difficulties, the less said of you the better."

The letter was sent off in due course, and by return mail (which the writer had certainly not expected) came the reply.

Walter Ainslie wrote a frank, kindly letter, his father had long since been dead, but he had often heard of his cousin Caleb and was glad to renew the interrupted intercourse with his kindred; he had prospered wonderfully, had one son and a good affectionate wife, if ever his cousin Caleb, or any of his family came to England, they must come straight to Milltown, where there'd be a hearty welcome for them, and then having thus assured his kinsman of his good will, the rich manufacturer went on to what to the Colonist was the gist of the letter.

"It's the strangest coincidence you should write to ask me about Lancelot Bright, seeing a man of that name lives five miles from here, and (for what reason I've never been able to make out) hates me rather more than poison. It's possible, of course, this Lancelot Bright is not the one you're seeking. But I should say he was, as I know he spent two years abroad, though I never heard where. He was only a poor relation, but he came in for this property unexpectedly, just six months after he returned to England. He married, soon after, a very pretty girl—an Earl's daughter—and, I believe, a good, true woman. They travelled for some years, and then settled at the Priory. There are two daughters, but no son, which is supposed to be a great

grievance, only as the entail does not exclude females, it's of no consequence. Mr. Bright is M.P. for our borough, and a Tory of the Tories. He is not at all popular here, on account of his haughty ways and overbearing manner, but his wife and children are much beloved. Of course, they look down on me like anything, and Lady Katherine would as soon think of visiting her washerwoman as my missis. I can't imagine *why* you want to find out Mr. Bright. I take it this is your man, for I heard incidentally he was the very last of his family, and that Lancelot has been a favourite name with them for generations. He is a tall, military-looking man of fifty-five, a fearful temper, and so straight-laced, we all think he must have sown an awful crop of wild oats some time or other. He has good features, though rather too strongly marked. My son, who is mightily amused at the idea of the 'Great Bashaw,' as he calls the Squire, being 'wanted' by any relation of ours, says if I tell you about the scar on his hand, you'll know at once if he's your man. It's an ugly, white, crooked mark, right across the back of his right hand. And the story goes here, that a snake fastened on this hand, and the wound being cauterised by unskilful people, he will carry the mark of it to his dying day."

Owen Bright read this letter carefully through twice after his uncle had handed it to him, and then looked up with a strangely eager face.

"Well?"

"He's the man," said Mr. Morton, gravely. "Why, I remember that accident with the snake as well as if it were yesterday. Upon my word, Owen, I think I'd rather have heard he was poor and in want. Just to think of his quietly taking possession of a fine English property, and leaving you, his eldest child—his heir—to get on as best you could."

"You have never let me want a father's care," said Owen, warmly, "but I understand what you mean. He has acted a shabby part, and I feel ashamed of him."

"Of course, there's only one thing to do," said Mr. Morton, gravely, "you must claim your rights."

Owen opened his eyes.

"What in the world for? I am quite happy here. I've no wish to claim anything from a father who has deserted me for nine and twenty years."

"You must claim your rights," repeated the old colonist. "Do you think I am quite blind, and? General Fanthorne may refuse his daughter to the adopted son of a Martinstown merchant, however wealthy that merchant may be; but he couldn't refuse her to the heir of Lancelot Bright, Esq., of Greenheath, England."

Owen looked at the old man affectionately.

"Do you think I'd forsake you after your loving care all these years, uncle?"

"No, I don't," replied Caleb, "for you've your mother's own loving heart. But I'm seventy, turned, lad, and I don't expect I've many years left. I can wind up my affairs in a few months, if needful. And though I've been very happy here, I'd fain see my native land again before I die. When everything's realised, there'll be about fifteen thousand a year, Owen. Plenty to keep the old man quietly in some English village, and leave enough for you to have an establishment fit for the heir of Greenheath and the son-in-law of General Fanthorne. His term of service here is up in about a year. I'm pretty certain, Owen, that when I tell him the truth about your parentage, he won't refuse you his child."

"I have never asked him for her," said Owen, slowly. "I never dared to while I thought my father might be a beggar or a gaol bird. I simply dared not speak to him."

"Well," said Caleb Morton, "I think that's carrying scruples too far. Look here, Owen, you'd better settle matters with the Fanthornes, and sail for England as soon as possible. My cousin will give you a warm welcome, and introduce you to an honest lawyer. Make it clear to Lancelot Bright you don't want a penny from him in his lifetime. All you claim is to be acknowledged as his eldest son. Then when I hear all's settled, I'll wind up things here and come over to the old country. Bless you, lad,

don't thank me. It's no sacrifice. I should have retired and settled in England long ago, only I was always afraid my precious brother-in-law might turn up to disgrace us. It's a strange thing, Owen, I've pictured Lancelot dead. I've fancied him in *want*, starving, perhaps, but it never entered my head he was living in clover, like a rich English gentleman. And somehow, my boy, since I've heard that I feel more angry with him than I ever did before. And now a truce to these grave thoughts. Do you go round to Government House and see what the General says to you."

General Fanthorne was not a rich man. The post of Governor of Martinstown was worth fifteen hundred a year. But then he had a large family, and the education of the younger ones cost him a goodly sum. His wife was a gentle, graceful woman, whose ready tact and pleasant ways, added much to the Governor's popularity, while Hilda was the prettiest girl in the colony.

Owen Bright asked for the General, and was shown at once into his private room.

"Anything the matter, Bright?" was the greeting he received. "You look very serious."

"I have come on a serious subject," said the young man, frankly. "I am here to ask you for the greatest happiness life can give me."

"Good gracious!" said the general unsuspiciously; "pray what is it?"

"I love your daughter, Sir, and I believe if I have your consent I can win her heart."

"If you can you'll be a deal cleverer than other people. My wife told Hilda last week she thought she must have left her heart behind her in England."

Owen's face flushed.

"I should have spoken long ago, Sir," he said, simply, "but for the shadow over my history, but that being removed, I have ventured to hope you would listen to me."

"There never was any shadow over your history, except that your father deserted you," said the general, warmly. "I like what I have seen of you. I respect your uncle more than any man in Martinstown, and if you marry Hilda I shall look on you as Mr. Morton's adopted son, not as the deserted child of some scrapegrace Englishman. Now you had better go to Hilda, but understand one thing clearly, I've nine children and I haven't saved a shilling. My wife will have her pension, and my life's insured, but I can't give one of my girls a penny when they marry."

"I did not wish for it, Sir. Uncle Caleb says he will settle an income on my wife if I am happy enough to win her. He said if Hilda accepted me he would come up and talk to you of his intentions."

"Hilda's alone on the verandah," said the Governor, with a smile. "Go in and win; I shouldn't wonder if it's for your sake the child's refused to listen to other men."

And it was. Try as Owen had to conceal his love, Hilda had read it, and as she cared for the grave reserved man of thirty far more than for the idle young fellows who had flattered her and paid her compliments ever since she came out to the colony a year before, she had been content to wait, sure that in time Owen would tell his love-story.

Hilda Fanthorne was a tiny, graceful creature, with soft brown hair and big dreamy blue eyes; she had a fund of merriment and high spirits, which would contrast well with Owen's rather silent reserved nature.

She looked a perfect little fairy as she sat in her low Madeira chair and listened to her lover's pleadings, but though she was so young and childlike she had a woman's true tender heart, and she did not keep him in suspense.

"I always liked you better than anyone else," she said, naively, "but lately you seemed to avoid me, and I thought I had offended you."

"I was afraid of betraying my love," he answered, "when I was uncertain about my father's fate, it seemed to me, Hilda, there was a grave barrier between us."

"There is no barrier love cannot conquer," she answered, gravely.

The interview between Mr. Morton and the General was equally satisfactory; the proofs of

Owen's parentage and his father's identity with Lancelot Bright, Esq., of Greenheath, seemed to the Governor's mind indisputable, and he was delighted with the idea of Owen's going to England to claim his father's recognition.

"With your generosity he does not need a penny from Mr. Bright," said General Fanthorne, "and as your nephew I should have been fully satisfied to trust my child to him, but, Mr. Morton, right is right, and by every law of nature and of property, Owen ought to be recognized as his father's heir. It's all very well for the Brights to argue, he is rich enough already; if the question is not thrashed out now it will arise in another generation, let him join his father in making provision for his half sisters, but don't let him abate one jot of his claim to be recognized as Lancelot Bright's son and heir."

It was all settled in a wonderfully short space of time, and within a fortnight of receiving Walter Ainalie's letter Caleb Morton saw his adopted son on board a steamer homeward bound.

### CHAPTER III.

LADY KATHERINE BRIGHT went to seek Loveday with an aching heart. She knew perfectly that, however her child decided, there would be strife and discord at the Priory. If the girl followed her own wish and refused Lord Marchmont's splendid offer, the Squire would be furious with her; if, against her own instincts, she accepted her noble suitor, what would Cynthia say on seeing the honours and grandeur she had coveted for herself devolve on her younger sister?—not that Miss Bright loved Lord Marchmont (she always declared love was only for the lower orders), but she thought him a suitable match for herself.

Lady Katherine fastened the door on Loveday and herself, and then sat down on the bed by the side of her youngest child. Her own tears were falling hot and fast, she felt so utterly powerless to help or comfort the girl.

"Has papa told you everything?" asked Loveday.

"Yes, dear, and I am very, very sorry. I had hoped Lord Marchmont admired Cynthia. I think my little Loveday too young for the onerous position his wife must fill; but, my darling, I must say this much—he is a good, true man, and to have won his love is no light honour."

Loveday looked up with a tearful smile.

"You always understand, mother; I couldn't make papa see it was just because Lord Marchmont was so good and true he deserved something better than an unloving wife."

"Your father's heart is set on the match, dear; you see, he is ambitious for you."

"Is your heart set on it, dear?"

"If you had cared for Lord Marchmont, I could have given you to him without a fear. I have promised your father to try and put before you the advantages of the match," said poor Lady Katherine sadly.

"Mo'her, don't; the Squire has dinned them into my head till it aches. He says I am a wicked, selfish girl, and that I shall ruin you all. I don't understand how that is."

Lady Katherine stroked the pretty head caressingly.

"I will tell you a secret, dear, which I only heard this morning. My portion, which was to have come to you, has been lost through the failure of a company in which it was invested. The money your father had saved for us went too. When the Squire dies, Loveday, you and I will be utterly unprovided for."

"Not quite, mother; my godmother left me a hundred a year."

"I forgot that. Well, dear, the position is this—Cynthia will have Greenheath and about five thousand a year. I can't doubt she will give us a home with her; but the fact remains that, if you do not marry before your father's death, you will be dependent on your sister."

"I shouldn't like that," said Loveday frankly, "for, somehow, Cynthia and I never think quite alike; and if I owed everything to her, perhaps



she wouldn't like my having an opinion of my own. But I am quite sure you and I could live on a hundred a year, and father may live another thirty years, so we won't worry. I'd rather risk being dependent on Cynthia than marry Lord Marchmont for his money."

It was Lady Katherine's own feeling exactly, so she could hardly find fault with it.

"Will you come down to lunch, dear," she said, as the gong sounded, and she rose.

"No;" and Loveday shivered at the idea. "I can't face papa again yet, and—Cynthia. I shall go for a long walk by myself, mother dear; the air will do my head good, and I would rather be alone."

Lady Katherine wished herself back with Loveday when she saw the two faces awaiting her in the dining-room.

Evidently the Squire had told Cynthia of Lord Marchmont's offer, and Miss Bright was intensely indignant—whether at the peer's bad taste, or her sister's folly, the mother could not guess.

It was a terrible meal. At first the presence of the servants kept the Squire's temper in restraint; but when they had placed the sweets on the table and retired, he turned to his wife with the question,—

"Well, have you made that senseless girl hear reason?—Oh, you need not look at Cynthia; I have confided my worries to her, and she fully agrees with me that Loveday is behaving atrociously."

"Shamefully," said Cynthia, with set lips. "If she had not encouraged Lord Marchmont he would never have proposed to her. He is good enough for a duke's heiress instead of a penniless commoner. I feel ashamed of Loveday."

"I do not," said her mother very gravely; "the child is cast in a different mould from you, Cynthia. To her a loveless marriage is simply a sin; and I do not see why she should be forced into one. As for the future," and Lady Katherine's voice was very grave and proud, "if I am unhappy enough to survive my husband, I would rather work for my bread and Loveday's than know we were surrounded by luxuries purchased by well-nigh breaking her heart."

"That's nonsense," said Cynthia tartly. "Of course, you would both be provided for, but Loveday ought not to be so selfish."

Lady Katherine looked at her husband, but he evidently agreed with Cynthia, for he did not attempt to prove her.

"I am going to drive over to Heathside to see the Duke about those poachers," he said to his daughter, as they rose from table; "will you come with me, my dear? Your mother, no doubt, will be busy cosseting her spoilt child; but, mark my words, Katherine, a day will come when you will bitterly repent encouraging Loveday in her folly."

Lady Katherine answered nothing. She went to her boudoir, and presently saw Cynthia and her father start for their drive, proud, haughty, and prosperous. Then she sank back in a low chair with a sigh of relief.

"I am glad they are both gone. I could not have listened to Cynthia's taunts. Heaven grant, for Loveday's sake, I may live a few years longer, until she is happily married. Those two do not understand her, and she would have no chance against their iron wills."

Loveday came in presently in her pretty holland dress and shady hat.

"Are you strong enough for a long walk, dear, you look so tired?"

"The air will do me good. If I stayed at home with you, mother, the Squire would declare you were encouraging me in my rebellion. I am going into Milltown, it is not far by the fields!"

"Milltown," repeated Lady Katherine in amazement, for it was the rarest thing that any of the family went there. "My, dear child, why?"

"One of my Sunday-school children has gone to live there. Of course, father won't let her come to the treat next week, so I thought I would take her a book and a packet of sweets. Its Jenny Warren, her mother's married again to one of Mr. Ainslie's hands."

"Well, pray be back in good time," said Lady Katherine, anxiously, "for it's a very rough place."

"Not in the daytime, mother, when everyone's at the works;" and with a parting kiss Loveday sped away.

She had never been in Milltown on foot in her life. She could have counted the times she had driven through it; but she really wanted to see the child, who till a few days before had been her favourite pupil, and she preferred walking to risking the Squire's anger by taking his horses to a place he disliked. No one would remark a lady passing through the town on foot; but to have kept servants in Mr. Bright's livery outside the cottage of one of the "hands" would have been food for gossip for days.

As she told her mother, it was no distance going through the Priory woods; you came out on the outskirts of Milltown, and a mile brought you into the very heart of the place. Loveday knew the exact spot which marked the end of her father's property. Then came a weary stretch of waste land, and then the closely-packed houses which formed the streets of Milltown. It was very different from Greenheath, with its model cottages and pretty lanes. There was no mistake about Milltown being dirty, smoky, and hideously ugly; but Loveday met with no incivility, and was soon directed to the house where Jenny Warren and her mother now lived.

It was at the furthest end of Milltown, which she had not reckoned on. A trim, well-kept little house, and Mrs. Lewis (late Mrs. Warren) seemed very proud of her good fortune.

"You see, Miss Loveday, even with the Squire's letting me have the cottage rent free it was a hard struggle. I'd sit stitching sometimes from morning till night and not earn more than a shilling. And Lewis is a good steady workman, earning fifty shillings a week. It's an abstinence he is, miss, so there's no fear of his not keeping his place, and he's as proud of Jenny as if she were his own!"

Loveday, who had come to condole, found she was expected to congratulate. Mrs. Lewis told her a great deal about Milltown, but the event of the week had evidently been a visit from Mrs. Ainslie.

"And she brought me a wedding present, Miss, of a clock, which you can see on the chimney-piece, because Lewis had been with them so many years. A pleasant, kind-spoken lady she seemed, not beautiful and stately like your ma, Miss Loveday, but still kind and thoughtful for us poor folks!"

Mrs. Lewis was anxious to direct her young lady to a nearer way home, which would take her into the woods without going all through Milltown; but whether from being such a newcomer herself her instructions were not clear, or whether Loveday mistook them, she took quite the opposite way to that intended, and after an hour's quick walking discovered she must have been going in a circle, for she seemed now rapidly returning towards Milltown. She did not know what to do; she was almost tired out. The weather, which had been very sultry, now looked threatening, and at last a heavy storm of drenching rain came down, accompanied by flashes of vivid lightning and peals of thunder so deep and loud, that poor Loveday crouched under the hedge and put her fingers in her ears to try and shut out the awful sound.

"You mustn't stand there my good girl, it's awfully dangerous in a storm like this."

The speaker, a good-looking young fellow, in a well-made morning suit of rough tweed, had evidently taken Loveday for a working girl, seeing only the drenched holland skirt and plain straw hat. Cynthia would have been furious; her sister at any other time might have felt amused, but now she was too weary and wretched for any feeling but fear.

"I am so frightened," she said, looking up; and her voice at once told Denis Ainslie of his mistake. "I have lost my way, and I seem to have walked miles!"

"Miss Bright!" exclaimed young Ainslie. "I beg your pardon, but I only meant to warn you of your danger; will you allow me to try and find your carriage?"

"It is not here, I walked to Milltown, and Mrs. Lewis told me a short cut home, but I think I have missed it."

"I think so; you are a mile the further side of Milltown, and five miles from the Priory. You can't possibly walk home in this storm. Will you take shelter with my mother? Our house is close here, and I am sure she will be glad to take care of you till the rain ceases!"

Loveday was silent, thinking what a terrible plight she was in to appear before an unknown strange lady; but Denis misunderstood her hesitation.

"You'd better come," he said gravely. "I promise you we won't presume on it to claim your acquaintance in future. I believe the Queen has taken refuge from bad weather in a cottage before now, so Miss Bright may condescend to accept a shelter at Mrs. Ainslie's!"

Loveday shot him an indignant glance from her beautiful eyes.

"I did not know who you were," she said frankly. "I only hesitated because I know I must look something dreadful. Your mother would think you had brought home a drowned stranger, and the damage to her carpets would be considerable!"

"I think we may risk that," said Denis, pleasantly, "you'll catch your death of cold if you stay here. Come along."

He opened a tiny gate in the hedge which Loveday had not noticed, and they found themselves in the grounds of Milltown House. A very few yards and they reached the entrance. A neat looking maid with cherry coloured ribbons in her cap opened the door, and it said something for her training, that she betrayed no surprise at the very extraordinary-looking companion her young master had brought home.

"Where's my mother?" asked Denis; but the question needed no answer, for a pleasant-faced, middle-aged woman came running into the hall as fast as her extraordinary stoutness permitted, and looked at Loveday with anxious concern.

"You'll catch your death of cold, child," she said, kindly, "you must come and take off your damp clothes at once. Where did you find her, Denis?"

"Just by the wicket-gate, mother. She had lost her way; but I had better introduce you properly. Miss Bright—Mrs. Ainslie."

Mrs. Ainslie who had taken Loveday's hand to lead her upstairs dropped it in sheer dismay.

"Are you playing a trick on me, Denis?" Loveday found her voice.

"It is quite true," she said, gently. "I am Mr. Bright's youngest daughter; but Mr. Ainslie seemed to think you would give me shelter all the same, though I honestly warned him I was dangerous to the carpets."

The girl's frank smile reassured Mrs. Ainslie. She took her hand once more, and led the way to her own room, the very perfection of comfort.

"I wish my husband was at home, but he's gone to Southampton to meet a cousin from abroad. I'm delighted to see you, Miss Bright, and you must put on dry clothes and take a cup of tea with me, and by that time it will have cleared up; if not I'll send you home in the brougham."

"I'm afraid I am giving you a lot of trouble," said Loveday, when the dripping holland had been removed, and she found herself in a luxurious tea-gown of her hostess; miles too big, but otherwise a very becoming garment, "but oh, it is a comfort to feel dry again."

"You look dreadfully pale and ill," returned Mrs. Ainslie. "I hope you haven't got a chill already."

"I have a very bad headache. It was that partly made me come so far alone."

"And I hope your mother's well," said Mrs. Ainslie, cordially. "I've never spoken to her, but I've met her driving sometimes, and I think she's just the sweetest face I ever saw; you're not like her, Miss Bright!"

"Oh, no! I am the odd one and take after nobody. Cynthia is like both papa and mother."

Denis was waiting for them in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Ainslie left the guest to his

care while she went to hasten the tea. Neither of the young people spoke at first, then Loveday looked up and asked,—

"Why are you watching me so, Mr. Ainslie."

"I was trying to decide which the Squire would have preferred. For you to be struck by lightning, or—to come here."

"Struck by lightning!"

"That old tree you were leaning against has been struck. I heard of it when you were upstairs. You only left it just in time."

"Then you have saved my life?"

"I never thought of it in that light. I meant if the Squire was awfully angry at your coming here you might tell him the danger you escaped, or I should not have mentioned it. Why does Mr. Bright hate Milltown and all of us so, do you know?"

"I haven't an idea, papa hates so many things."

Ainslie smiled.

"How odd! Why is he so prejudiced?"

"I don't know. When he's up in London it seems somehow life is freer and wider. We love him dearly, and he's awfully good to us; but when he's at home I always feel frightened of making him angry."

"Well, I never was afraid of my father," said Denis, "he's just the other way, you know; nothing in the world makes him angry, and mother's just the same."

"Haven't you any sisters?" asked Loveday.

"No. I had one sister but she died with my mother—my own mother, you know."

Re-enter Mrs. Ainslie followed by such a tea, that Loveday decided her hostess thought eating and drinking a certain cure for the headache.

Often afterwards that scene came back to the girl, herself in the quaint, rich tea-gown, installed in an easy-chair, Mrs. Ainslie petting and making much of her while Denis had suddenly grown grave and watched her with a strange intentness, and when tea was over and the storm had finished, Loveday declared she felt so much rested she could walk home.

"You had better not," said Denis, "for the nearest way is through the wood, and that won't be safe in case we have any more lightning. Let me drive you as far as the beginning of Greenheath, than you can walk the last mile to the Priory."

"But it is nearly seven, and it will make you late for dinner."

"Father is away, and mother won't mind how long she waits."

"No," said Mrs. Ainslie, kindly. "I'd rather wait till ten than Miss Bright should risk any danger. Order the dog-cart Denis while I take her upstairs to put on her own dress, it's dry by this time."

Alone with her hostess in the splendid bedroom, Loveday put one hand on her arm and said, wistfully,—

"I don't know how to thank you, Mrs. Ainslie. Mother will write and tell you how grateful she is. I know she will wish she could come and tell you so; but—"

"Don't fret my dear," seeing the beautiful eyes were not far from tears. "I don't want any more 'thank you's,' and I quite understand women folk can't do just as they like about making friends when they've husbands to consider, and I knew before ever I came to Milltown the Squire had a prejudice against my husband."

Loveday bade Mrs. Ainslie almost an affectionate farewell, and took her seat beside Denis; as they drove off it came into her mind that none of their acquaintance, not even the much-praised Lord Marchmont, was handsomer or more agreeable than young Ainslie. When they were through the lodge gates, he turned to her with a question.

"Did you ever hear your father speak of Africa, Miss Bright?"

"Never; he was there once for about two years, but mother says she thinks he was very unhappy there, because he never likes to talk about it. You know he was quite a poor man in those days; he never expected to be the heir of Greenheath."

"I told you, I think, my father had gone to Southampton to meet a cousin of ours."

"Yes," said Loveday, not understanding in the least what Mr. Ainslie's kinsman could have to do with her.

"I know that Owen—that's my cousin—wants to see your father on a matter of business. Life is a strange thing, Miss Bright, and sometimes troubles come to us from strange sources; if evil comes of Owen's visit to your father, will you believe that I could not help it? Mr. Bright has never been friendly to us, but neither my father nor I would seek to injure him. Owen is our cousin, one of the only two kinsmen we have in the world; we couldn't well refuse to give him a welcome when he has never been in England before."

"Of course not, Mr. Ainslie," looking at him gravely. "Do you know of any trouble coming to my father, and are you trying to break it to me?"

"What trouble could be coming?"

"Well, you know, papa only got Greenheath through several unexpected deaths. I daresay it's only my fancy, but from the way you spoke, I thought your cousin knew of a nearer heir to the Priory and had come to turn papa out."

"You are quite mistaken Miss Bright; your father is the lawful owner of the estate. While he lives no one can deprive him of it."

"I'm glad of that. I love every acre of the dear old place—every room in the Priory, though I'm always glad Cynthia is the elder, for I should make a very bad mistress for the place."

"Why?" asked Denis, simply.

"Oh, because nothing would make me into a grand lady. Mother and I agreed to-day, we should be very happy in a tiny cottage on a very small income."

In his heart, Denis Ainslie breathed a prayer she might never have to try it.

They came to the cross roads at the beginning of Greenheath; Denis alighted and handed out his passenger.

"I shall never forget your kindness," said Loveday. "I feel just as though you had been heaping coals of fire upon my head."

"I have done nothing of the kind. I cannot ask you to come and see my mother again, because I am sure the Squire would not allow it. But may I ask another favour? If ever a time should come when you need a friend, will you remember I would do anything in the world to serve you?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

SEVEN was Mr. Bright's dinner hour; the dressing bell rang at half-past six, and punctuality was one of the Squire's cardinal virtues, so no one ever dared to keep him waiting.

Poor Lady Katherine felt in utter dismay when six o'clock came without bringing home her darling. She sent the tea-tray away in despair, and began pacing the beautiful drawing-room, wondering what in the world had happened to Loveday.

Cynthia and her father came in soon after six, but to the mother's unbounded relief, they made no inquiry for Loveday, taking it for granted she was still in the seclusion of her own room. They talked a little of their visit and then went upstairs to dress for dinner, leaving Lady Katherine knowing she ought to follow their example, and yet reluctant to lose the chance of a few words with Loveday.

Going to her dressing-room she met a young girl whose chief duty was needlework and carrying out the skilful instructions of the French maid.

"Prissy," said her mistress in a low voice, "will you go into my boudoir and watch for Miss Loveday? When you see her coming up the avenue, go and meet her, and tell her I want to speak to her in her own room."

People's servants are far more observant than their employers think. All the domestics knew that their favourite, Miss Loveday, was in disgrace with her father. Prissy understood at once her mistress wished to save Loveday from a reprimand for unpunctuality, and undertook the duty with alacrity.

Lady Katherine hurried into the first evening

dress she took out of her wardrobe—a rich grey silk—arranged with a lace fichu over the body, and was downstairs again in less than ten minutes, so speedily had been her toilet.

"There's not a sign of Miss Loveday, my lady," said Prissy, respectfully. "I think she must have sheltered somewhere from the storm, but she'll never be in time to dress for dinner now."

"No; I should like you to go on watching for her, Prissy. Meet her in the hall, and tell her I think she will be too tired to come to the drawing-room. Then, when she is in her own room, go and fetch her a little tray of anything cook has ready, for she will be tired out, poor child."

Prissy would have carried out her instructions to the letter, but unfortunately, everything went contrary. The Squire, who usually took a full hour over his dinner, and then smoked a cigar before joining his family, hurried through the meal at such a rate, it still wanted a quarter to eight when his wife and Cynthia left the table, and to Lady Katherine's dismay, he followed them to the drawing-room almost immediately.

"Where is Loveday?" he demanded, suddenly. "Does she never intend to take her meals with us again?"

Lady Katherine turned very white. She had heard from Priscilla that Loveday had not yet returned, but to tell this to her husband, she simply dared not.

"Loveday will be with us at breakfast," she said, slowly.

"I choose her to be here now. Cynthia, go and tell your sister to join us at once."

"It is of no use to send Cynthia," said the mother, sadly. "Loveday went out for a walk after lunch and has not yet returned. I think the storm must have frightened her into taking shelter."

Mr. Bright turned on his wife with a cruel charge.

"You have sent her away lest she should yield to my orders, and do her duty."

"I have not," said Lady Katherine indignantly. "She told me her head ached badly, and she thought a long walk would do her good, so she meant to go and see one of the Sunday school children."

"All the children in our Sunday school live in the village," said Cynthia sternly; "a mile is not exactly a long walk."

She had always seemed to love her sister till now, but Lord Marchmont's offer had stirred up all the envy and hatred of a proud, jealous nature; it really seemed she could not forgive poor little Loveday for having been preferred before her.

"Loveday always speaks the truth," said Lady Katherine; "Jenny Warren has moved to Milltown, and that is quite a long walk."

"To Milltown?" exclaimed the Squire; "surely, my lady, you have not let a child of mine go there alone, a place of all others I detest; what can you have been thinking of?"

"I don't suppose Loveday will come to any harm there," said her mother. "The child's motive was a good one, and it is a quiet enough walk."

"Here she comes," said Cynthia, "and she does look a figure. I should say her dress had got wet through and then been hung to the fire, it looks rough dried; I don't think Lord Marchmont would feel very proud of his choice if he could see her now."

"Cynthia," cried her mother, "don't speak so unkindly of your sister, it is unfair; I will go and see that Loveday puts on dry clothes."

"Excuse me," said the Squire stiffly, "your anxiety must wait. I have a few questions to put to Loveday first, and I shall insist on their being answered."

He rang the bell imperiously. "Tell Miss Loveday to come in here, I wish to speak to her."

It was not really dark, but from a whim of Mr. Bright's the large soft lamps had been already lighted, filling the room with a wonderful radiance, as poor little Loveday came reluctantly in, and placed herself near Cynthia; the contrast between the sisters struck the mother with a bitter pang.

Cynthia wore a rich evening dress of rose silk, half veiled in black lace; a string of large pearls



on her snowy neck and bracelets on her fair rounded arms; almost too grand a toilet for a quiet family dinner. Had it been put on because the sister wished to prove to herself how much more deserving of admiration she was than her poor little sister, whose dragged holland hung limply in unlovely folds as she waited for her father's questions.

"Where have you been? What do you mean by coming home at this time?"

"I have been for a long walk, and coming home I lost my way and was caught in the storm. I was wet through, and frightened at the lightning so when I was offered shelter I thought I had better accept it. I was so wet I don't think I could have walked home."

"Who gave you shelter?"

Loveday was an inveterate truth-teller, but she trembled as she answered "Mrs. Ainslie."

"Mrs. Ainslie!" repeated the Squire indignantly. "Well, it seems you are bent on defying me; don't you know that I hate the Ainslies; that they are all bad, presuming people; not fit for you to speak to."

"Mr. Ainslie said they would not presume on this afternoon to claim my acquaintance," said Loveday gravely, "and that the Queen before now had taken refuge in a cottage."

"Oh, he is a fluent speaker; you ought to have ordered him out of your sight."

"But I had lost my way, and I was close to his grounds; it would have been ordering him off his own property, and, mother, half an hour later the tree I had been leaning against was struck by lightning, so I might have been killed."

Lady Katherine drew Loveday to her heart, the Squire said nothing.

"Well," returned Cynthia, "you have done a pretty thing, visiting people you know I have always kept at dagger's length; why, young Ainslie may presume on this to ask you to dance with him at the next county ball."

"Did you go into the house?" asked Lady Katherine. "Was Mrs. Ainslie kind to you?"

"She was as kind as she could be. She had my dress dried and gave me some tea, and then her son drove me home as far as the cross roads, lest I should lose my way again."

"Her son!" said Cynthia. "Odious young man, that he is."

"It was young Mr. Ainslie who found me in the storm. I did not see the father at all. He is away."

"Well," said the Squire, in angry accents, "I never thought one of my children would stoop to acquaintance with the Ainslies."

"This young man is the nephew of Sir Alfred Denvers," interposed Lady Katherine. "On one side of his family his descent is as good as Loveday's."

The Squire turned on his wife with something like an oath.

"You've encouraged the child in rejecting a suitor who was far too good for her. You seem to be suggesting now she should take up with the son of a self-made man, who never had any education to speak of."

"I was just thinking so," said Cynthia bluntly. "Mother and Loveday are so absurdly sentimental. They are quite capable of making a hero of romance out of this very common young man."

Lady Katherine rose, indignation in every feature. It was not often the gentle lady made people remember that she was an earl's daughter by her haughty bearing, but she did so now.

"Come with me, Loveday," she said, taking the girl's hand in hers. "I do not choose you to listen to Cynthia's disreputable conduct to her mother. Denis Ainslie is the son of my dearest friend, a woman whom my father—a peer of England—regarded as a suitable companion for me. I will only say to you, Cynthia, there is nothing so common and so unladylike as rudeness to parents."

They were gone. The Squire turned half irritably to Cynthia.

"You've no need to reproach your mother, child. She's a good woman, though she never had enough proper pride."

"She is just like Loveday," retorted Cynthia. "You and I have to keep up the family prestige,

papa, for those two care nothing for it. Depend upon it, Loveday will never be Lady Marchmont. And if you are not careful you may have Denis Ainslie for a son-in-law."

But perhaps the Squire felt he had gone too far, for his next words were to defend his wife.

"There is a great excuse for your mother. She and the first Mrs. Ainslie were girls together. And if the latter had lived, I don't suppose I could have kept them entirely apart. I took your mother abroad, and kept her there for years; but when we came home, Lucy Ainslie was one of the first callers, and I expect they would have met in the course of time."

"Papa," said Cynthia, half timidly, "why do you hate the Ainslies so? I'm like you; I can't bear them. But with me, it's because I hate to see people notice the young man and treat him as a gentleman. Now, that can't be your reason, for you have detected them always."

"Cynthia, you have asked me something I have never confided to anyone, not even to your mother. But you are my favourite child; you see things as I do, and if you promise to keep my confidence secret, I will tell you why the very name of Ainslie is odious to me."

"Of course I'll keep your secret, papa."

"Nearly thirty-two years ago, my dear, I was very badly off. There were three or four lives between me and this place. In fact, I never thought of coming in for it. I had been intended for the church, but I had a young man's scruples about taking orders when I knew I preferred a secular life. My uncle, the Squire of Greenheath, was very hard on me. He accused me of idleness, because I pointed out to him it was beneath one of my family to slave at a clerkship, or pound pills as a surgeon's assistant. At last he consented to pay my passage to a colony in Africa and give me five hundred pounds on landing on condition that I never troubled him again."

"And did you accept the offer?"

"Yes, and I went out to Martinstown, a young fellow between three-and-four-and-twenty, full of hope. I'm sure I expected to become Governor-general of the colony at the very least."

"And you did not like it?"

"Like it!" There was no mistaking the horror on the Squire's face. "I hated it. The leading people were just like our lower middle-class. There wasn't a real gentleman in the place. The storekeepers and hotel proprietors expected you to shake hands with them and treat them as equals. It was always too hot to move or too windy to stand on one's legs. There never was a more hateful disgusting place."

"And did you invest your money?"

"Invest it!" cried Mr. Bright. "I had to live on it. There was nothing in the place fit for a gentleman to do. I wrote home to my uncle and told him I couldn't stand it. He replied, I could please myself, he should do no more for me. I concluded I'd rather be poor in Martinstown, where no one knew me, than in England where I had friends; so, though my money was gone, I dragged out two years in the colony. Then I had a bad attack of fever, and a man I knew there, and had had dealings with, offered me a loan of two hundred pounds to pay my passage home, and keep me till I could decide on my future plans."

"It was kind of him," said Cynthia. "Of course he was sure of repayment; but still it was a generous act."

"Undoubtedly," said her father, stiffly—not thinking it necessary to tell her the loan was still unpaid—"he was not a bad sort of fellow; but it happened he distrusted my chances of getting on; and he persisted in giving me the address of a cousin of his in England, whom he thought could help me to a billet. Just as though I should have served the sort of man his cousin would be. Well, of course, I never went near the fellow, but I didn't need. Before I had been six months in England the unexpected deaths occurred which gave me my present home and income."

Cynthia started.

"But what has this to do with Walter Ainslie?"

"Simply this. It was to his father my colonial friend gave me that letter of introduction. I

know he wrote to old Ainslie, asking him to befriend me. Well, I never came near the Priory until Ainslie, senior, was dead; and I don't suppose he told his son about me; but just the knowing such parvenus as the Ainslies had been asked to befriend me made me shun all intercourse with them. No one in Middleshire knows what part of Africa I was in. If Walter Ainslie's cousin ever wrote to him to inquire about a Mr. Bright, he wouldn't identify me with the wandering, unhappy young fellow who left Africa twenty-nine years ago."

Cynthia looked at her father approvingly.

"I should have done just the same. It's hateful to feel these people might have had it in their power to put you under an obligation to them. I wish we could get rid of them."

"We can't," said the Squire, impatiently.

"Goodness knows I've done my best. I've made things as unpleasant for the Ainslies as I possibly could. I've prevented their getting into society, I've been as disagreeable a neighbour as I could, but they are too strong for me. Walter Ainslie had a large fortune with his second wife, and everything he has touched has succeeded. He's a far richer man than I have ever been, and he has but one child. Mark my words, Cynthia, that Denis Ainslie will be one of the richest men in these parts at his father's death. People will forget the plebeian strain, and remember that his mother was a Denvers."

"I never shall," said Miss Bright, haughtily.

"It must be a comfort to you, papa, that I am your eldest child. Loveday has no pride, she would never keep up the status of the family. Now I shall walk faithfully in your steps!"

Mr. Bright did not look much delighted at this statement.

"My great desire, Cynthia, is to see both my girls, you especially, married before my death. You are the beauty of the county, Cynthia; you have been the belle of two London seasons, and I feel sure you will make an alliance worthy your rank and beauty. If I see you a peeress, darling, I can die content!"

"You must not talk of dying, father," said Cynthia; "I could not spare you; and you are quite a young man—only fifty-five."

"We are not a long-lived family, Cynthia," returned the father. "It is a rare thing for a Bright to live over sixty, though, if they once pass that age they may reach eighty, or even ninety; but within my memory not one of my kinsmen has passed his sixtieth birthday. When I remember that, Cynthia, and that I am nearly fifty-six, I feel anxious."

#### CHAPTER V.

It was just three days after the thunderstorm, and Loveday's involuntary visit to Milntown House that two gentlemen appeared at the Priory and asked to see Mr. Bright. One was an old man with a shrewd thoughtful face; the other young and handsome, but with such a striking resemblance to the Squire that the butler wondered if he could be any distant relation; near kindred he knew his master had not.

"What name, sir?"

The elder man handed him a card, the younger said nothing, but stood looking at the beautiful old hall with its carved oak furniture like a creature in a dream. Hawkins ushered them into the library, and went in search of his master.

"Mr. Arkwright, sir, and another gentleman wish to see you on particular business."

The Squire started. He knew Mr. Arkwright by name as a lawyer of wide repute. There was a secret in his past life which made him always anxious at the arrival of strangers; but he could hardly refuse the interview requested without exciting marked comment, so he repaired reluctantly to the library.

He knew Mr. Arkwright by sight, but who was his companion? It seemed to Lunefot Bright he saw the image of himself as he had been when still a young man he stood at the altar with Lady Katharine Dean. He almost stumbled, and caught hold of the back of a chair for support.

"I see you notice the resemblance to yourself," said the lawyer gravely; "this gentleman, Mr. Bright, is your first born child and only son—Owen Bright!"

"I don't believe it," cried the Squire, who had recovered his self-possession by an effort, and thought only of his beloved Cynthia.

"It is some trumped-up story. I never was married when I was in Africa. I—"

"Hush!" said the lawyer sternly; "who spoke of Africa? Mr. Bright, the firm which I represent have a name above suspicion. You may rest assured this is no 'trumped-up' story. When Mr. Owen Bright called on us two days ago, we carefully examined the papers he produced proving the marriage of Lancelot Bright and Mary Morton at Martinstown, Africa, and the baptism of their only child Owen. Also a statement witnessed by the Governor-General of Martinstown, setting forth that the gentleman now present is the child you left behind in Africa, who has been brought up by his maternal uncle, Caleb Morton. We have seen letters from you to your wife with reference to Greenheath and your family, too correct to be counterfeit; and we have agreed to conduct Mr. Owen's case, confident that he is the person he represents himself to be. I may add, were further proof needed, it is supplied by his startling resemblance to yourself and your strange agitation at his appearance."

Lancelot Bright felt conquered; the retribution he had always dreaded was here at last. For Cynthia's sake he made a faint show of resistance, but he knew it was useless.

"I defy you to do your worst," he said, sadly. "You can prove nothing. If the young man has a vestige of pride, he will refuse to be foisted on a father who has no desire to make his acquaintance. Let his mother's relations provide for him; they can bring him up in their humble sphere; after years spent with them he would be strangely out of place here."

James Arkwright marvelled at the utter heartlessness of this speech, but Owen Bright turned towards the Squire and answered quietly,—

"Mr. Bright—for after your last words I scorn to call you father—you know that I am your son. I want not one farthing from you in your lifetime; my uncle, to whom you have alluded with such scant courtesy, considering he was your benefactor, and his loan to you is still unpaid—my uncle, I say, will provide for me, but for the sake of my dead mother's fame, and for the sake of my future wife and possible children, I insist upon being recognized as your son and lawful heir."

"And if I refuse," ironically, "what then?"

"The law must take its course. It may be a long and expensive process, but in the end I shall win. Besides the proofs mentioned by Mr. Arkwright, my cousin Walter Ainslie has now in his possession a letter written to his father twenty-nine years ago by my uncle, asking him to befriend you for his sake. The name of the vessel and the date of her reaching England are given; it will be easy to prove that you were the only passenger of the name of Bright on board."

Lancelot Bright looked from one to the other, spell bound.

"Why have you been silent all these years? If you had any faith in your claim, why not have brought it long ago?"

"Because we believed you were dead, or living in poverty. It was only when I wished to marry I resolved before putting my fate to the test, to assure myself I had an untainted name to offer my wife. Had my father been a gaolbird or a drunkard, I should have shrunk from asking her to share my life. Mr. Morton wrote to his cousin at Milltown, asking if he could advise him how to trace Lancelot Bright. The man to whom that letter was written had long been dead. His son replied that a Lancelot Bright was living at Greenheath. He mentioned a scar on your hand caused by a snake wound; my uncle remembered the accident perfectly, and we knew we had discovered the father who deserted me."

Mr. Bright was silent for a moment.

"If you prove yourself my son ever so, how can you claim my property? You are a stranger

here, my daughter is a child of the soil; she is my rightful heiress and you shall not rob her."

"I wish to rob no one," said Owen sturdily. "Already I am a rich man, but right is right and I am your lawful heir. If the matter is not settled now, it will crop up in another generation; my children may claim their rights from the child of my step-sister. I want the question settled once and for all. When I marry Miss Fanthorne, I want to marry her as the son of Lancelot Bright of Greenheath. My future father-in-law, the Governor-General of Martinstown, insists on this, and I think he is right."

"It will break Cynthia's heart."

"It need not," said Owen, gravely. "When my rights are once acknowledged I will join with you in making the most liberal provision for the children of your second marriage, but I will not, I cannot, give up my birthright."

"I will see you again," said the Squire; "I see you are staying at the Ainslies; people I detest, so I will write. I promise to send you a letter to-morrow saying whether I fight or yield; now go, you have upset me and I want to rest."

They left at once, only as he passed his father's chair Owen said, simply,—

"For my mother's sake I hope you will acknowledge my claim; you loved her once, surely it can't be a very painful thought that her son should have your name; for the rest believe me, my half sisters shall have no reason to complain. I only ask to act a brother's part to them."

From the drawing-room Cynthia and Loveday watched the visitors depart, and then they marvelled their father did not return. Thomas brought the afternoon tea, but still the Squire did not come, Lady Katherine grew uneasy.

"I will go and tell papa tea is ready, don't wait for me, children."

She entered the library gently, and was struck by the expression of her husband's face; he had lighted the fire (he was a chilly man and on the hottest days the library fire was always "laid" and ready to be kindled into flame by a single match), and had stretched out his hands as though to warm them; he was shivering, and looked years older than he had done at lunch.

"Lance," cried his wife, frightened, "what is the matter, aren't you well?"

"A little tired I think," he answered; "sit down, Katy, I want to talk to you."

But he was so long in speaking that her alarm increased, going up to him she took his ice-cold hand and chafed it gently in both of hers.

"Let me send for the doctor, Lance, I am sure you are ill."

"No, I want only you—Katy be gentle with Cynthia poor child, be gentle with her always—I know you have thought I spoil her because I gave her more love than her sister; but I had wronged her so cruelly, and it was all I could do to make up."

Surely his mind was wandering: wronged Cynthia indeed! why she had ever been his first thought, the very apple of his eye.

"Katy, do you remember long ago when I asked you to be my wife, I told you I could not give you my first love—that I had been married before."

"Am I likely to forget, when all these years her memory has been dearer to you than my living presence?"

"No, dear, I loved you far more than my poor Molly; but Katy, there has been a secret ever between us, spoiling our happiness, drawing us ever apart."

"I know it," said the wife, sadly, "that secret has been ever present, Lance; are you going to tell it me at last?"

"I must—or you will hear it from others, all the world must know it soon; but Katy do not curse me."

"I shall love you always," she answered, fondly, "with no secret between us we shall be happier than ever before."

"I told you—I had been married before, I never told you there was a child."

"A child," Lady Katherine thought him dreaming, "impossible."

"No, I left the baby with his mother's brother, I deserted my own flesh and blood. When I became a rich man I was ashamed of my

humbly born wife, ashamed of her child, I imagined that Africa was so far off the people there would think me dead; I thought the baby, a little sickly child, would die, if not who was to tell him the father whose very passage home was paid for by charity, was a rich man."

Lady Katherine put her hand lovingly on his arm.

"I can guess the rest, Lance. You heard to day your son was alive."

"He came here."

"Come here, and you never told me! I would have welcomed him for your sake."

"I refused to acknowledge him. Then when the lawyer proved to me his claim would stand in any court of law, I sent them away and promised to write my decision."

"He must be nearly thirty."

"Thirty turned. He is like me, Katy. You might think it was my dead self as I was when you married me. He wants nothing from me now, he is rich already and engaged to General Fanthorne's daughter. All he wishes, or rather demands, is to be acknowledged as my son. He declares that once done he will join me in providing liberally for the girls. Since you can forgive me, Katy, I should not mind so much, only Cynthia—Cynthia."

Lady Katherine could not comfort him in this. She knew Cynthia would bitterly resent her changed prospects, and that she would not scruple to blame her father. The gentle wife could only put her arms round the Squire's neck and tell him that she and Loveday could forgive any loss of fortune while he was spared.

"I must write to-morrow," said the Squire, feebly, "and Katy, which is it to be—war or peace?"

"Peace," she answered, promptly, "for we know your son asks only his rights. You loved his mother once, how could you wrong her son?"

"She was a pretty creature; but Katy, you were my life's love, and little Loveday's like you in character, though Cynthia has your beauty. The little one must have her way about Marchmont. I wish he'd turn to Cynthia for consolation."

"I am afraid he won't."

The fire had burnt up now. Lady Katherine rang for tea, sent a message to the girls their father was not well enough to come to dinner, and then she sat on with her husband, feeling more one with him than she had ever done before now that the secret between them was removed.

Love blinded her to the baseness of Mr. Bright's conduct. Love blinded her to the fact he had kept the secret till he was found out. He was only doing tardy justice to his son now the law was about to compel it.

He was very tired, and presently he fell into a doze. He awoke from it with a strange, scared look on his face.

"The children, Katy, quick, I must see them once again. Mary has come to call me; but I must see them first."

Lady Katherine rang the bell, and the girls came quickly. They had been expecting to be summoned. They had no idea how serious their father's state was; but had taken it as a matter of course, he would wish them to come and say "Good-night."

"Good-night, papa," breathed Loveday, "kiss me, please, just to show you are not angry."

"It's good-bye, little one," he whispered.

"No, I am not angry. You have your mother's heart, and you were right to obey it. Cynthia, Cynthia."

The beautiful heiress bent over him anxiously.

"Why didn't mother send for the doctor?" she asked, imperiously, "you look so ill."

"Katy," breathed the Squire in a whisper, "send for Hawkins, there should be a witness."

Loveday dashed off to fetch the old butler. Cynthia still hung over her father thinking his mind was wandering. The man came in with an anxious face.

"Hawkins," said his master feebly, "I am dying. There's no time for lawyer or magistrate, but I can trust my dear wife. You have been a faithful servant, you will remember my last words."



"Surely, Sir," answered the old man; "but this is only one of your attacks, you'll soon be better."  
 "Perhaps not; you saw the gentlemen who came here to-day? The younger one is Owen Bright, my lawful son, the heir of Greenheath." He closed his eyes as though the light tried them, then opened them feebly and took his wife's hand.  
 "God bless you, Kate!"

His head fell back on his pillow, and then came a long, sad silence; the girls thought their father sleeping; Lady Katherine and the butler knew better, she was a widow and her children fatherless.

## CHAPTER VI.

ALL news travels fast, and before the family at Milltown House had retired to rest they heard of the Squire's death; the tolling of the Greenheath bell at past ten o'clock was such an unusual thing that Mrs. Ainslie who had her fair share of curiosity, sent her maid to enquire at the gardener's cottage if they knew who was dead. The girl came back open-mouthed and awe-struck that it was Mr. Bright.

Mrs. Ainslie might not be a lady as Cynthia understood the word, but she had quite enough nice feeling not to wish the news to come to Owen Bright suddenly; she scrawled a tiny note to her step-son, and having despatched it to the smoking-room, she went to bed wondering not a little at the strange turn of fortune which had made their cousin from Africa master of the Priory.

Walter Ainslie looked up as his son read the note.

"What's the matter, Denis? Your mother is not given to letter-writing."

Mr. Arkwright had returned to London; the Ainslies and Owen Bright were alone.

Denis hated his task, but he never flinched from it.

"I'm afraid it'll be a shock to you, Owen, but there's no use in putting off telling you; my mother writes the passing bell we heard half-an-hour ago was for your father—Squire Bright is dead!"

The eldest Ainslie started.

"I never heard he was ill."

"He has looked wretchedly out of health ever since he came down this time," said Denis, "I believe he suffered from some internal complaint; the precise nature of which no one knew."

Owen looked round him in a strange dazed sort of way, and then appealed to his elder kinsman.

"Mr. Ainslie, do you believe it was the shock? If I believed I had killed him I could never forgive myself."

"Be easy," said Walter Ainslie, "you are not to blame. I was grumbling about Mr. Bright to our doctor, who is a great friend of mine, only last week, and asking if he could account at all for his strange unneighbourly ways. Blake told me to have patience, for the Squire was dangerously ill; he might live two years with care, but he would never be strong again. He put down his irritability to some secret care; his desertion of you, and the apprehension that at any time you might appear to claim your rights, may have killed him Owen; but rest assured yesterday's interview did not."

"I wish I had been kinder to him," said Owen, slowly; "poor father, he must have had a heavy burden."

"My dear fellow," said Walter Ainslie, "if you'll let me speak plainly, Lancelot Bright's death is a blessing to everyone. Do you think he could have had a single happy moment after his wife and daughters knew of his treachery? Do you think he could ever have held up his head again in the neighbourhood when people knew his conduct?"

"They must never know it, now," said Owen, simply. "Mr. Ainslie, you and Denis are clever business men; can't you think of any way by which I can claim my birthright, and yet keep it secret that my father deserted me?"

"It depends on Lady Katherine," said Mr. Ainslie, shrewdly. "If she will hear reason, it might easily be given out to the world that her

husband believed you dead, and your arrival in England was an unmitigated surprise to him. I never spoke to her, but people say she is a good woman; her daughter is as proud as Lucifer."

"Not the little girl who came here on Tuesday," said Denis. "She was just a pretty child, with not a scrap of pride about her."

But a surprise was in store for them. Breakfast was almost over when a message was brought to Owen. Someone wished to see him on urgent business.

"It's Mr. Hawkins, the butler at the Priory, sir," explained the maid, "but he won't give any message; he says he must see you."

Owen went into the little room where they had shown the old servant. Hawkins looked at him as though he would read him through and through.

"I expect you've heard the news, sir?"

"Yes, and it was an awful shock to me. I only hope my visit yesterday had nothing to do with your master's illness?"

"Nothing, sir; he was subject to attacks of pain, and Mr. Blake warned me he might go off in any of them—my lady sent me, sir."

"I should have called on her to-day, only I feared to intrude upon her grief."

"She wished me to tell you I was with your father at the last. He told me he'd no time to send for lawyers and magistrates, but he could trust his dear wife to see you had justice done to you, and I was to bear witness he told me you were his lawful son, Owen Bright, heir of Greenheath."

"It must have been an awful revelation for Lady Katherine."

"My lady never was one to think much of money. She wants to see you this afternoon, Sir. I was to tell you she should have your rights to the utmost, but she begged you to join her in trying to save the Squire's memory."

"I will do so, gladly. I hope she knows it was not money I wished to claim. I told my father, yesterday, if he would own me as his son, I would join him in providing liberally for Lady Katherine and her children."

"They've nothing, sir; not a penny piece, save that Miss Loveday has a hundred a year left her by her godmother. My lady's fortune and the master's savings were lost in a bank. I may say then, you will come?"

"Yes—at what time?"

"My lady telegraphed for Mr. Wiltshire, the family lawyer, and for the gentleman who came with you yesterday; she found his address on his card; and she thinks they will be down by three."

Punctually at three o'clock Owen presented himself at the Priory, and Hawkins at once ushered him into the dining-room. The library was tenanted by the remains of its late master.

Mr. Wiltshire and Mr. Arkwright were already there, and almost immediately Lady Katherine Bright entered, followed by her two daughters. Loveday sat down close to her mother and held her hand. Cynthia stationed herself by Mr. Wiltshire. Hawkins, at a sign from his lady, stood by the door.

"I have asked you to come here," said Lady Katherine to the three gentlemen, "because I wish to tell you that with his last breath my husband acknowledged Owen Bright as his lawful son, and desired me to see justice done him. My daughters and our butler will endorse what I say."

"Yes, my lady," from Hawkins.

"Yes, mother," in a low whisper from Loveday.

But Cynthia rose, and ignoring everyone else, addressed herself pointedly to Mr. Wiltshire.

"My father's mind was wandering at the last. I utterly refuse to take the delirious words of a dying man as evidence of this preposterous claim. As the heiress of Greenheath, and my father's eldest child, I dispute the right of this young man to any portion of the Squire's property, and I shall be glad if you will act for me in the matter."

Mr. Wiltshire looked at her gravely.

"Miss Bright, when I received your mother's telegram, announcing your father's death, and begging me to come here to confer with Mr. Arkwright, I went round to the latter's office at once, thinking I had better know on what subject

my advice was needed. The proofs of Mr. Owen Bright's parentage there submitted to me have convinced me of his claims. I cannot act for you against your brother. Had your father carried his secret with him to the grave, my decision would have been the same. Had the Squire lived, and desired to dispute his son's identity, I should have told him the evidence was so convincing, no respectable lawyer would undertake to dispute it."

Cynthia looked from one to the other of the little group haughtily.

"Mother, will you see me beggared? Don't you know I meant to provide for you and Loveday? You will be ruined too, if you give way to this impostor."

"I must obey your father's last wish, my darling. Besides, this gentleman's resemblance to my husband is so striking, it would convince me without anything else."

"Then I need not stay here," said Cynthia. "But understand, all of you, I do not own that person as my father's son, and I will fight for my rights to the bitter end."

She was gone. The two lawyers drew a breath of relief. But Owen Bright felt too much for Lady Katherine and Loveday to be indignant with poor Cynthia.

"Will you leave the matter to us?" he asked his step-mother, gently, "and let Mr. Wiltshire and his colleague arrange some story for the world, which—while proving my father acknowledged me on his deathbed—will not let anyone suspect he took no step to trace me in all these years."

"I will leave it to them gladly. And I will go away directly after the funeral, with my children. I can't leave this house while it holds my husband."

(Continued on page 453.)

AMONG the numerous surmises as to the origin of the exclamation "Hear, hear!" as applied to an orator, is one to the effect that a Father of the Primitive Church, who was accustomed to preach in a very large basilica, was wont to pause now and then in the delivery of his sermon, and to ask the congregation at the extremity of the nave whether they could hear what he was saying. The reverend preacher had a very powerful voice; so that his congregation who were the most distant were usually enabled to cry out in approving accents, "We hear! We hear!"

THERE are many coal mines of which the galleries extend under the water of rivers, such as the mines of Liege, in Belgium, of which the galleries form a connection of the mines situated on both sides of the river, regular subaqueous tunnels; but more remarkable are those mines of which the galleries extend under the ocean, as is the case with some coal mines in England. More remarkable still is one of the coal mines at Nanaimo, on Departure Bay, beyond Victoria, British Columbia. This mine is known as the Wellington, and its galleries are situated six hundred feet under the surface of the ocean, which here surrounds an archipelago of islands, very similar to the Thousand Islands, at the head of the St. Lawrence river. The length of the galleries of this mine is continually increasing, and extends at present six miles under the Pacific Ocean. Nearly the whole population of the town of Nanaimo amounting to nearly one thousand, is engaged in the mines, and earns from three to six dollars a day. Liberal as this appears to be, the cost of living in that inhospitable region is so high that miners can only make both ends meet. A great drawback in these mines is the excessive amount of combustible gases, by an explosion of which, three years ago, one hundred miners lost their lives. It appears that the coal mines here are more profitable than the gold mines, even in Alaska (where they are numerous), for the simple reason that they can be worked the whole year round, while the gold mines can only be worked four months in the year, so that the miners must live in idleness eight months, and that in a country that cannot produce the necessities of life, which are all brought from the United States, and therefore burdened with heavy freightage.

## FOR EVER AND A DAY.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"It is lie!" Anastasi said a third time, in defiance of the statement Cuthbert had made so boldly.

Her small, weak hand had no strength to draw Jocelyn back, but her mere touch seemed to carry an extraordinary influence to the young man, whose every pulse beat in this moment with a frenzy of rage, born of that sudden passion which Cuthbert's deliberate utterance of Margaret Hilliard's name had roused within him.

The sort of curious apathy that had fallen on Jocelyn ever since his arrival at Yelverton was broken asunder. In this moment he thrilled with life, with a burning, tumultuous passion that was terrible in its intensity. But for Tasi's quickness, but for the sound of her quiet, low voice, but for the touch of her small, weak hand, it would have gone very hard with Cuthbert Denison. The strength that filled Jocelyn at this moment was more than natural, he would have shown no mercy to his enemy had his hands laid hold of him this time.

Borrett had stepped forward like lightning as his master sprang suddenly to his feet, but then he drew back; for he saw the instant Tasi spoke that Jocelyn would do nothing violent.

The servant took upon himself to turn to Cuthbert, who, though still seemingly smiling, had a curious look of fear mingling with his customary sneer. His eyes had a malignant expression as they rested on Anastasi.

"You'd best be gone," Borrett began saying, roughly under his voice; but Anastasi spoke aloud again and stopped him.

"No," she said, very quietly, but with a determination in her voice that was amazing. "No, Borrett, Mr. Denison will not go just yet. I have need of him for a little while longer—just a little while."

Those big magnificent eyes looked across at Cuthbert. They dwelt upon the man's mean clean-shaven face intently. Their gaze had a curious effect upon Cuthbert. He frowned suddenly, though he laughed that hard cold laugh of his.

"I congratulate you, Jocelyn Gretton!" he said, harshly and abruptly. "You are well protected with a bully of a man servant, and a woman who—"

Tasi stood between the two men.

"Jocelyn," she said, very hurriedly, her voice low and quivering now, "do you think any words, any insults that come from the lips of such a creature as this are worth a moment's anger! Let him speak on if he will, but do not heed him. Listen to me instead. Your father," the girl spoke the dead man's name with exquisite tenderness; both her hands were clinging to Jocelyn's strong ones. "Your father, before he died, Jocelyn," Tasi said, slowly, "had some prescience of the trouble that was coming to you through this man. He knew him at his real worth. He prayed that you might never know him also; but he feared, and he entreated me to be to you what he would have been, and to stand between you and all evil. I gave him my sacred promise. No wrong should be attached to your hands if I could prevent it. No crime should be laid at your door, however terrible the provocation, if I could use my power against it. You—you will help me to keep this promise always, Jocelyn, dear brother, will you not? You will remember my vow to your loved dead. You will let nothing this coward may say or do—make you forget my promise to your dear father—to the—"

The voice had grown weaker and weaker, the girl's slender figure quivered from head to foot—her breath came now in deep, panting sobs—the strain of the moment was too terrible, her strength had to give way beneath it.

Jocelyn forgot every other thing in his sudden fear and grief at her condition. An anguish of sharp reproach seized him as he realized how weak she had grown.

"Tasi, Tasi! You are ill!" he cried, hoarsely. "Tasi, dear, what is it?" he put his arm about

her, and laid her gently into a chair. "Tasi, speak to me, speak!" he entreated almost wildly.

Cuthbert's sneer grew deeper as he looked and listened; he was leaning against the wall, his arms folded on his breast, suddenly the sneer faded from his lips. After a long, silent moment and with a great effort, Tasi recovered herself, and still clasping Jocelyn's hand, she raised herself forward and addressed Cuthbert slowly but firmly.

"You see you have failed again, Cuthbert Denison," her voice, whispered. "Your lies can carry no weight—so long as my life lasts you shall not rouse or tempt Jocelyn to do any wild or wrong thing—his soul shall be unstained by sin though you may try to take the honour of his name from him for ever," then swiftly, feverishly, Tasi looked upwards at the man bending over her. "I thank you, Jocelyn," she said, a sound, as of tears in her voice. "You are very good to me, but there is still more that you must do. You must tell this man that the story he has brought you to-day is contemptible in your eyes, that you utterly deny it! Tell him that he can go discredited, dishonoured still further by the lies he has just told against the woman who loves you. Ah! yes, I know it—I know it! who loves you better than her life!" the large dark eyes had a world of imploring eloquence in their depths—the flush had gone from Jocelyn's face again, he was deathly pale, he trembled at her words, he could not answer her. How could he answer her?

Tasi clung to his hands more eagerly.

"Ah! dear, dear Jocelyn I entreat you to believe me," she whispered, almost piteously. "I feel—I know I am right now. I feel that the darkness has rolled suddenly away, and that everything that was mysterious and terrible, her strange silence, her strange action, all is clear, all is explained. It is so easy to me now," the girl said feebly yet still eagerly. "I did doubt—but I doubt no longer. By his coming here to-day this man has defeated his own desire. He wishes to impress you with Margaret Hilliard's falseness—he has only confirmed his own treachery. He has done good, not evil, for he has revealed the truth. Jocelyn, Jocelyn, you will listen to me. You—you will believe me. I—I cannot explain very well; but oh! I know I am right. I know it—it is written here," the thin, small hand smote the feebly, beating heart. "I will pray Heaven we may be forgiven for having doubted her. She has never ceased to love you. Some treachery was worked to divide you both; but her love remains untouched. Look—look at that man's face—see if the truth of what I say is not written there. He is a coward and a liar. He cannot deny my words for he knows how true they are!"

With a gasping sigh for breath Tasi's voice was hushed, her head fell forward on her breast, her hand that had been outstretched in denunciation of Cuthbert, fell nerveless to her side.

The man opposite laughed roughly.

"I pay no attention to the ravings of a mad woman," he said shortly; "and as you seem to be so very much occupied, I will take my departure."

Jocelyn gave no heed to him. He was bending lower and lower over Tasi's white face.

"Brandy! bring me brandy, Borrett!" he cried hoarsely. His heart was riven at the sight of this frail young creature so weak in her physical forces, so strong in her soul's goodness.

The words she had uttered about Margaret buzzed and surged in his ears like a tumult. He scarcely knew what he said, what he did. If only he could bring some colour, some life into that white face lying so death-like against the chair.

"Bring me some brandy! at once! at once!" he cried hoarsely; and then a strange thing happened.

Jocelyn found himself drawn on one side very gently. A woman's voice answered him; a woman's hands had touched him; it was a woman's figure, and a familiar one, who knelt down beside Tasi in his place.

Kathleen Bartropp had entered the room so quietly that no one of those present had seen her come.

It was Chadwick who had ushered her so quietly to his master's presence.

A great wave of gladness and hope combined had rushed through the old servant's heart as he was summoned to admit a second visitor to Yelverton, and he found himself face to face with Lady Hilliard's best friend.

Miserable and hot with anger, Chadwick had been pacing to and fro in the hall when the cab containing Miss Bartropp drew up at the door.

The sound of voices came in a muffled fashion from the library.

Kathleen Bartropp saw instantly from the old man's face that some new trouble was at work with Jocelyn Gretton.

"Will you take my name to your master at once?" she asked hurriedly, and with some nervousness. "I am Miss Bartropp. I come on a most important business."

Kathleen had half a fear Jocelyn might refuse to see her, but Chadwick soon set this fear right. "I know you, miss," he said to her cordially. "You belong to her ladyship; and if I ain't lost my wits, you don't come here on no bad errand. I'll take you straight to Sir Jocelyn, miss. He's got one visitor already—curse him for a black-hearted brute! I hope you'll forgive me, miss, but it ain't in human nature to think of my dear young master's enemy and not to curse him."

"You can say all you like of Cuthbert Denison; I shall not stop you," was Miss Bartropp's reply, given so heartily that Chadwick quite involuntarily stretched out his hand to her.

He would have withdrawn it the next instant, but Kathleen had clasped it warmly.

"So, Mr. Cuthbert is here already, is he? Well, let me lose no time. I have an idea he will not be very pleased to see me here just now. Which is the room? The library! Ah, yes, I can hear some one speaking. Open the door quietly; I want to surprise Mr. Denison."

Chadwick obeyed her command to the letter, and Kathleen Bartropp was inside the room, listening to poor Tasi's feeble, yet eager, words with a heart that thrilled with pain and tenderness combined.

Her eyes rested on the scene before her quietly for a short while; then, as Tasi's voice failed, and as that sharp cry of real anguish escaped Jocelyn's lips, Kathleen stepped forward.

"This is my work," she said quietly, "leave her in my hands, Jocelyn."

Jocelyn retreated in dazed fashion as she knelt beside the chair, he stood looking at her in an amazement that would have been overwhelming had not his anxiety for Tasi been so terrible; as it was he could only gaze at her as at some spirit form that had glided in in some invisible fashion, it was so strange, so amazing, to see her there.

With a faint—very faint—smile, Kathleen just glanced at him.

"Don't be alarmed, Jocelyn, I am not a ghost. Just come here, she is opening her eyes again, let her see you."

Kathleen rose to her feet and turned towards where Cuthbert stood livid with rage, preparing to take his departure.

"Kindly remain a little while longer, Mr. Denison," Miss Bartropp said very curtly and coldly, "your presence here just now is very apt, I—"

"I have no time to waste on further tomfoolery," Cuthbert answered with a snarl. The varnish was rubbed off in this moment, the real man was revealed. The coarse, common nature that had been cloaked in such suavity, such seeming dignity, stood out clearly, distinctly. "I came here to see Jocelyn Gretton, not to be annoyed with a parcel of hysterical women."

A sudden change swept over Jocelyn's face, he was standing beside Tasi's chair, again his hand closed over one of her slender hands. He turned and faced his enemy.

"And having come here to find me, you can say out what you have to say."

It was the Jocelyn of old who spoke now, Jocelyn in all his dignity, with the handsomeness which had been so great, so charming, shining out on his face once more.

"Your mission I believe," he went on, fixing his clear blue eyes on his cousin's pale face and lowering brow, "Your mission here to-day was,



I believe, to announce to me the fact of your approaching marriage with Lady Hilliard, to—"

A sharp exclamation of amazed horror from Kathleen made Jocelyn pause.

A flush covered Miss Bartropp's face.

"What!" she cried, almost choked by her astonishment. "What! you dare to say this, you dare to utter such a lie, to couple your name with a woman whom you have wronged as you have wronged poor Margaret? you dare to say such falseness! is there no limit to your baseness!—no, you do not go! Jocelyn, give your servants orders to prevent this man from going till you have heard from my lips the story of his treachery to you and Margaret!"

A quiver passed through Jocelyn's whole frame at the mention of that well-loved name. His heart beat so quickly as to almost choke him. The hand that held Tasi's trembled like a woman's.

"Lock the door, Borrett," he said, speaking as clearly as he could. "Mr. Denison will honour us by remaining a little longer."

The rage that gleamed out of Cuthbert's eyes was something more than human; it was the glare of the evil passion of an infuriated brute. A great tremble swept over the man's whole frame. Around him at every turn stood defeat and despair. There had been no evil thing he had not thought of, no evil deed he would not have done to cover this man with dishonour and with grief; by every means in his power he had worked to separate Jocelyn from all that brought light or happiness to his life. Fate had aided him in a most extraordinary way; and yet—yet just when his triumph was shaping itself so well, so definitely, the cup of malicious pleasure was dashed from his lips. Even the knowledge that in all human probability the law-suit he was bringing would be crowned with success, and that in a very little while he would have the satisfaction of ousting Jocelyn from the home of his fathers would be robbed of its chief value if he could not wrest away from this man the treasure of Margaret Hilliard's love and trust. And this hope was lost to him for ever now. So long as he had been able to keep Margaret to himself, so long as no touch of other things had come to break the spell of his power, all had been well; but since yesterday, since that moment when quietly and all unexpectedly Kathleen Bartropp had entered the little garden of Margaret's cottage home, Cuthbert had realized absolutely that the hope he had been cherishing so carefully, and which had grown to such tremendous dimensions, was dashed to the ground, never to be raised again.

The moment was the worst he had ever experienced. The sight of Jocelyn, surrounded by love and faith and help on all sides was a picture full of bitterest disappointment to the man whose black hatred, whose evil passionate heart would not have been appeased even if he had sat and gloated over his cousin dying of destitution in the gutter. The burning torrent of his rage found vent in action.

As Borrett turned swiftly to obey his master's commands and turn the key in the lock, Cuthbert put his hand suddenly into the breast-pocket of his coat.

"Stand back!" he said in a voice of choked fury.

His voice was addressed to the servant by the door, but his hand was drawn quickly from his pocket and pointed straight at his cousin's upright form.

There was a gleam of shining steel for one instant, then a woman's sudden cry; then a swift rushing movement, and as the flash of light and the sound of a sharp shot rang out on the air, Anastasi Vignetti sank huddled and bleeding at the feet of the man she loved so well.

### CHAPTER XXX.

THE day that had been fraught with such excitement at Yelverton ended in a great calm—the calm that covers deep human grief, the calm that heralds the approach of death.

They had carried the still, white form of the dying girl up the stairs. She was quite sensible,

and though the pain of her wound and her weakness must have been terrible, she tried to smile faintly, tenderly into the weeping eyes of those about her.

It was Borrett and Jocelyn who carried her, and it had been Borrett's hands who had tied a bandage in rough but skilful fashion about the slender shoulder through which that cruel pistol shot had passed.

It was possible to check the outer bleeding in this way until the medical man whom Chadwick had rushed to find immediately could arrive.

But Borrett feared each instant that the poor child's life blood must come pouring from her lips.

"She must not even try to speak, miss," he whispered to Kathleen, in an agonised way. There was nothing to be said or done with Jocelyn. He was distraught with grief.

"She gave her life for mine. She has sacrificed her life for me," he said over and over again in a wild sort of way. The rush of tears that poured from his eyes were no shame to his manhood. It was a delicate and terrible task to carry the poor frail creature up the stairs. No hands could have been more gentle, but the journey was a fearful trial to all concerned.

When they were at the last step Kathleen bent over the still, white face. There was a look in the dark, magnificent eyes that wrenched her heart. What urged her to do what she did Kathleen could not very clearly have described; but some instinct, some mysterious feeling suddenly made her make the bearers pause with their burden.

"She can go no further. Carry her in here," she whispered. And she opened the door of the room.

Jocelyn nodded his head.

"Yes; in there," he said, swiftly. "It is my room."

A touch of joy seemed to pass over the dying girl's face, and Kathleen's woman's heart rejoiced suddenly.

"It was what she wished. Her eyes asked it. I understand plainly now. Poor child; poor little thing. Ah! Margaret, my darling, there is a lesson to be learnt from this poor creature's faith and clinging love!"

And Cuthbert, the murderous cause of this last sorrow that had entered beneath the old roof of Yelverton—Cuthbert had escaped, flown—none of them knew exactly how. He must have made his way out through the long, open window while the others had gathered round that small, still figure.

It was not of him they thought at this moment. They had no eyes, no ears, no senses, save for the poor child who by some supernatural effort of strength had flung herself before Jocelyn when she caught sight of that gleaming pistol.

As long as she lived the remembrance of the scene that followed would be printed on Kathleen Bartropp's mind. It was not alone the sight of Jocelyn's grief and anguish; not the beautiful look on the dying young face, whose eyes seemed to mirror some heavenly vision; it was the evidence of Borrett's suffering, of the big tears that rolled down the soldier's sunburnt face, of the quiver that ran through the man's huge brown hands.

Kathleen caught the mutter of the disjointed words that fell from his lips as he stooped to lift the wounded figure from the ground.

"To save a hurt against her—I'd have given my life itself!" he whispered, quite unconsciously.

Kathleen noticed how Tasi's eyes rested tenderly for an instant on the broken-hearted man.

They laid her as softly as human hands could upon the bed in Jocelyn's room. The gleam of pleasure that passed over her face lingered awhile after she found herself in a place sacred to her as having been for years and years the separate abode of her love in his old home. The pleasure passed away all too quickly, however, and as Kathleen bent over to whisper some gentle words to her, the dread that oppressed Borrett was only too well asserted, for a stream of blood came stealing from between the small white lips. The strong soldier turned away with a gasping sigh.

"It's her death knell, miss," he said in a whisper, as he went; "it would have been better if she had been shot through the heart, for then we'd have been spared the sight of all this suffering."

Down the broad staircase, going in a stumbling, drunken sort of fashion, Borrett reached the hall at last.

Chadwick had returned from the village.

"The doctor was to come immediately," the old man said, a tremble in his voice, for he had caught sight of Tasi's death-like face, and in common with all the servants at Yelverton he had nothing but affection and respect for the girl.

"The doctor!" repeated Borrett, with a groan, sinking in the chair, and covering his face with his hand for a moment, "the doctor! and will the doctor undo the work that murderous villain has done—will he put the life-blood back into her veins, the beat into her heart? There's no doctor can do nothing for her, now. She's going—and I pray as she'll go fast, that's all—just as fast as she can go! Yes, it's me as prays that; me, the man as worships her—all humble and beneath as I am—only a common soldier servant—but I worships her, Chadwick, and when the coffin closes over her, I'm a dead man too, for all the joy there'll be left in life for me!"

Headless of the amazement written on Chadwick's face, the sorrow-stricken man rose to his feet, and staggered out into the garden among the flowers she had loved so dearly.

The long, empty terrace seemed to strike Borrett's bereaved heart with a new and hurting pain. Never more would he stand and watch that beautiful, slender figure move to and fro along the terrace. Never more would he hear her clear low voice; never again would he see her lovely eyes, and faintly smiling lips as she accepted his gift of flowers, and thanked him for his thought.

He was only a common soldier servant, as he had said, but the heart that lived in his big, strong frame was none the less capable of love's divine intensity—love's aching desolation.

He did not know till this moment what a world of longing and of new things had been brought to him since he had met Anastasi. The change she had wrought had been no simple one; he had been gradually transformed; old habits and bad ones had fallen away from him under the influence of this lovely young thing. The oaths that had been so frequent on Borrett's lips had grown less and less; the nights spent in a public house belonged to the story of the past. He was only a common soldier servant but had given of his very best in his unconscious burden of love.

He went down the long terrace in that strange halting fashion. The dogs that Tasi had fondled so often were playing in the distance, the scent of flowers was borne on the evening air.

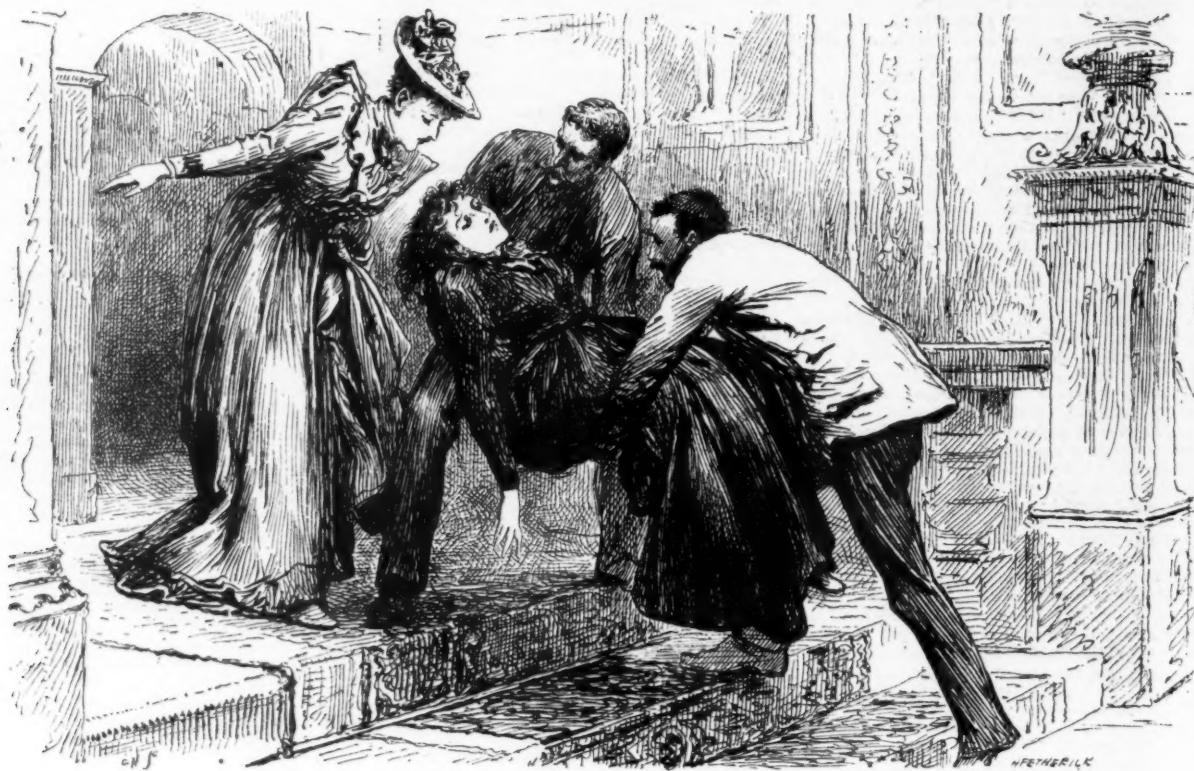
The man paused suddenly. A new and terrible feeling had come upon him. The anguish, the tenderness was gone, the burning passion of revenge, of desire to punish seized hold of him.

He came to a standstill, and looked about him in a vague sort of way. He was looking for some trace of Cuthbert, for some trace of the man who had murdered Anastasi.

"He has escaped this time, but he shall not escape long," the soldier said to himself in a slow deliberate sort of way. "He thinks himself mighty clever to have got off so easy no doubt; but he ain't so clever as he thinks. He's got me to deal with him, and by — this time there'll be no one near to save his throat when my hands get at it. I'll never rest till I've brought him to my feet. He can draw his breath a little while longer; but he need have no doubt he'll get his reward for this day's work, or my name ain't what it is!"

Back once again in the big London house, where she had spent such delicious hours and moments during the summer that was now passing away, Margaret Hilliard sat waiting with thrilling heart, with a heart that was filled with cold fear and palpitated with hot hope—a hope that was joy at the same time.

Kathleen had brought her back to town on the



"SHE CAN GO NO FURTHER. CARRY HER IN HERE!" KATHLEEN WHISPERED.

morning following their meeting, and Margaret had returned only too eagerly.

"But you will not remain with me, darling! You will go to Yelverton at once—at once, Kathie, not an hour must be lost now—promise me, oh! promise me to go at once!"

"Impatient baby! Of course, I will go immediately," Kathleen had answered; and, indeed, her own eagerness to see and speak with Jocelyn was almost as great as Margaret's; and after she had brought the young mistress safely back to the big town house, and seen her comfortably settled in her own room, Kathleen started out on the journey to Yelverton, which was to end so tragically.

To Margaret, left alone in the lonely old house, the moments seemed like so many leaden hours.

"If you are tired, and I fear you will be, darling," she said to Miss Bartropp, "promise me you will not think of coming back to-night. Go to your aunt, Lady Charlotte, if you cannot remain at Yelverton; only, only Kathie, dear, you will send me one word, one line."

Kathleen had kissed her with tender reproach.

"I am not like a certain young person I could name," she said, almost shyly. "I promise you there shall be nothing mysterious in my actions. I will return to-night, most probably, if not, I shall most certainly let you know."

And after this Kathleen had gone, and Lady Hilliard was left to live through the day somehow till her friend returned.

She was a very miserable being at this time. The memory of all that had happened, the thought of Jocelyn's sufferings, the mere suggestion of the pain she must have caused him, was enough to darken the girl's whole soul.

Kathleen's strong, firm belief in Jocelyn had found a resting place in her heart now. Against everything, every seeming proof, Margaret determined she would doubt no longer.

Cuthbert's villainy had astounded and impressed her so greatly that every word he had said to her stood out to denounce him.

She felt, without any testimony, that if he had

done so much evil to Jocelyn outwardly, he would not hesitate to have done a corresponding amount in secret, and she feared, only too truly, that the letter that had worked such havoc in her life had emanated in some way from Jocelyn's enemy.

There was no proof for this; nothing could be proved till Kathleen returned from seeing Jocelyn at Yelverton; but the girl's whole heart yearned over her lover, and turned with coldness and horror from the very thought of Cuthbert Denison.

"And I sat talking with him; listening to all he had to say, believing every word he uttered, while all the time he had done everything in his power to drag my darling in the mud, to ruin him, to cover him with disgrace, oh!" Margaret Hilliard cried aloud to herself in her anguish; "oh! it is all too terrible, how can I ever hope that Jocelyn will forgive me! yet, how can I bear to live if he will not listen to me; if he will never forgive me!"

The girl's fair loveliness was almost lost in this moment of devouring suspense, of indescribable yearning, of deep remorse.

The beautiful eyes were swollen with weeping, the colour was gone from the lips as well as the cheeks; it was a wan, sad likeness of the brilliantly happy Margaret Hilliard who stood in the drawing-room to receive the Duchess of Caledonia when she arrived late in the afternoon.

All the real anger and annoyance that had been forming itself in the duchess's heart against her godchild, melted away as her eyes rested on this forlorn young figure.

"My little Margaret!" she said, tenderly, as she folded the girl to her heart, "my poor child;" then as she kissed the pale, trembling lips many times, a little sharpness had to find a vent.

"How could you be such a fool," she asked, hurriedly, "to doubt Jocelyn—doubt Jocelyn Gretton! why I would as soon doubt the existence of the sun and moon; and then to run away by yourself and ask no one's advice and—but there I will say no more, poor little thing, you have suffered enough."

Margaret carried her godmother's hand to her lips.

"I have suffered—but—I have not suffered enough," she whispered. "What punishment will ever be sufficient for me," and then the agony broke forth. "Oh! godmother, do you think he will ever forgive me; when—he knows; when he hears all; will he be able to forgive. I have been so cruel, so cruel; my poor love! At such a time, when I out of all the world ought to have comforted him. Oh! godmother, dear; do you think it possible he will forgive."

The duchess simply took the girl bodily into her arms.

"Now if you cry any more Margaret, I shall shake you," she said, firmly, "as if I did not know Jocelyn Gretton; is he not Noel Gretton's son, and where in all the world would one find such justice and mercy and love, as you would find in Noel Gretton's heart!"

There was a tremor in the older woman's voice for a moment, then she went on speaking very briskly,—

"Now dry your tears and be quite—quite sure that when our dear, sensible Kathleen returns from Yelverton she will bring you news that will turn all your darkness into sunshine. Everything points to fair weather; not only in this groove but in others too. I have just had a telegram from Mr. Fielding, good man," said the duchess, warmly, "he is a true friend, I knew he would not let a chance escape him. See Margaret; read for yourself, and then agree with me that sunshine is breaking steadily through the clouds, and that all is promising well!"

Margaret took the telegram in her trembling hands, and read the hopeful message not once but many times.

"Oh! Jocelyn, Jocelyn," she cried, with a sudden passion in her voice, "if only the hope may be true; if only your love remains to me despite all I have done, what happiness may still be ours!"

But the happiness was not to be given to the girl's heart so quickly.

(To be continued.)





ALISON LAY STRETCHED ON THE GRASS PERFECTLY UNCONSCIOUS BOTH OF HER SORROWS AND HER LOVER'S PRESENCE!

## ALISON'S MARRIAGE.

## CHAPTER XVII.

In the study at Combe Lorraine Rectory, poor Dobbs poured out her story. Her mistress was dead, and the young lady who had been her companion for the last six months, and whom she had loved as a daughter, would be turned out into the cold world without a shelter for her head, unless Mr. and Mrs. Spenser would befriend her.

"Dead!" And there was no mistaking the sorrow in the Rector's voice. "Lady Hetherton dead! It must have been terribly sudden!"

"It was so sudden, sir, I can hardly realise it, even yet. My lady had meant to telegraph for Mr. Vincent, her lawyer, to-day. If she had been able to make a codicil to her will, she could at least have done something for Miss Hope. Now the poor young lady is quite unprovided for, and Mrs. Gardener declares she must leave Beechcroft to-day."

"How has Miss Hope offended Mrs. Gardener?" asked the Rector, thoughtfully. "There must be some reason for such cruel inhospitality."

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Gardener did not like my lady having Miss Hope to live with her. I think she felt that the young lady was a greater favourite with her cousin than her own girls, and—"

"Go on, Mrs. Dobbs," said Margaret Spenser, kindly. "You may speak quite freely to us. We are only slightly acquainted with Mrs. Gardener."

"Miss Alice is so pretty, ma'am, I think Mrs. Gardener is afraid her son might fall in love with her."

"And she has no home to go to?"

"No, sir. She came to Glen Rosa on the last day of October, thinking to find Mrs. Eustace staying with my lady. She had a long illness, and when she got better my mistress said she should stay as her companion."

"But surely Mrs. Gardener has no right to dis-

miss her cousin's companion without proper notice, the executors are bound to pay her a quarter's salary."

Dobbs shook her head.

"She's so young, sir, almost a child, and where's she to go to? Glen Rosa belongs to young Lord Hetherton now. Miss Hope can't go to the house of a gay young bachelor. And she has not a friend to help her. My lady told her last night you and Mrs. Spenser would advise her. And when Mrs. Gardener said, this morning, Miss Hope shouldn't sleep at Beechcroft another night, I made bold to come to you and tell you about her troubles. She was fast asleep, poor child, when I started."

Margaret Spenser darted one questioning glance at her husband. He smiled in approval, saying—

"Do what you like, dear, only don't embroil us with the Gardeners, if you can help it."

Mrs. Spenser sat down to her desk and wrote a few hurried lines. She gave the note to Dobbs, saying—

"I will send you back to Beechcroft in the pony-carriage, for I am sure you must be tired. I have asked Miss Hope to come to us until her plans are settled. If she decides to do so, the carriage can wait and bring her back."

There were tears in the old servant's eyes as she thanked the lady. And when she had driven off, Mrs. Spenser said to her husband—

"There must be something very attractive about Miss Hope to have won such affection," The Rector smiled.

"I hope you feel prepared for the most serious displeasure of Mrs. Gardener, Maggie?"

"I'll risk that."

Dobbs went straight upstairs to the room where she had left Miss Hope. But, alas! the sound of voices warned her she was not in time to save the poor girl from Mrs. Gardener's cruel taunts. She walked into the bedroom in time to hear the lady's cold, sarcastic tones, saying—

"Your future is a matter of complete indifference to me. It will probably be as guilty

as your past. All I require is that you leave my house at once."

"I will go now, directly," came the sad, weary answer. "Only, Mrs. Gardener, my character is my bread. How am I to earn my living if you slander me so cruelly? For pity's sake, take back your accusations, and allow me to refer to you as the relative of my last employer."

"Miss Alice," said Dobbs, unable to control herself further, "Miss Alice dear, I've brought you a note from Mrs. Spenser, and her servant's waiting for an answer."

With trembling fingers the poor girl tore open the letter. Never did invitation come at a moment when it was more needed.

"DEAR MISS HOPE,—

We learn from Lady Hetherton's maid that you may feel glad to leave Beechcroft without waiting for the funeral of your late friend. Will you come to us for a time, when we may be able to help you to decide your plans? We knew and esteemed Lady Hetherton very dearly, and will welcome you for her sake until we know you enough to do so for your own. If you are ready to leave Beechcroft, my pony-carriage can wait and bring you to the Rectory.

Yours sincerely,

"MARGARET SPENSER."

"I've packed your things, Miss Alice, all but a few, I can get together in a few minutes. Shall I go and tell the groom you will be ready in a quarter of an hour?"

"Mrs. Spenser is always doing eccentric things," said the mistress of Beechcroft, coldly. "Her house might be called a reformatory from the characters she receives there."

Alison answered nothing. She was trembling so she could hardly fasten her mantel.

Dobbs gathered together the few things of her young lady's lying about, took up the portmanteau—she was too angry to ring for one of the footmen—and prepared to leave the room.

Alison made one last appeal to Mrs. Gardener.

"I never sought to injure you, madam. It is most probable we shall never meet again. Won't you let us part friends?"

"I don't make friends with adventuresses," snapped the lady, "and that's what you are. I don't believe your name is Alice Hope any more than mine is."

The shaft struck home. Alison's pale face flushed crimson; she said no more, but the beseeching prayer in her eyes haunted Mrs. Gardener for many a day.

Five minutes later the gates of Beechcroft had closed upon the lonely girl and the six fair daughters of the house were safe from the contamination of her society.

Mrs. Spenser was in the hall when Miss Hope arrived, and her heart went out to the beautiful, sad-faced girl at once. It was clear to her the poor little companion had been so unwelcome at Beechcroft because her attractions would throw those of the plain Miss Gardener hopelessly into the shade. She took the girl's hand in both of hers and bade her welcome very kindly.

"This is a quiet house," she said, as she took Miss Hope to a pretty guest-chamber; "but after such a shock as Lady Hetherton's death perhaps quiet will suit you best."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Alison, brokenly. "Oh, Mrs. Spenser, she was so good to me, and she wasn't very old; if only she could have lived a little longer."

"Do you know her nephew, the present Lord Hetherton?"

Alison shook her head.

"I only came to Glen Rosa last October. I know nothing of Lady Hetherton's family."

They took the remains of the kind old lady back to Glen Rosa; she was buried in the village churchyard next her husband, and her will after all benefitted none of the Gardener family. It was made just before Alison came to her, just at the time when Charles Eustace lost his fortune.

There was very little to leave, only the dead lady's savings, her income reverting to the head of the family. Her faithful servants were provided for, and the residue of her property, about five thousand pounds, went to her beloved nephew, Charles Eustace.

Mrs. Gardener was furious when she heard it; she thought one of her dear girls would have been a much more suitable legatee.

And the funeral over, Alison Chapman *alias* Alice Hope, had once more to take up the heavy question of what to do with her life. She had an ample wardrobe, and about thirty pounds in ready money, so her prospects were better than when, six months ago, she left her husband and became on her wedding-day a lonely wanderer, but she was even sadder and less hopeful than she had been then.

The horror of James Chapman had urged her to flight. She had married him for the sake of her family, thinking the fateful step of leaving him once taken, her future would be as simple as that of any other friendless girl who has to earn her own living.

Alas! she knew her mistake now. Could the time have come over again, Alison would have faced her mother's anger bravely, would have faced even the thought of hardships coming to the children rather than have sold herself, for she knew the truth now. Her marriage would always hang about her like a terrible chain; she might never see her husband's face again, and yet the fact that she had once worn his wedding-ring must influence her every act.

Lady Hetherton had believed in her, but, alas! there were not many Lady Hethertons in the world. Mrs. Gardener's doubts would be shared by many; Alison had so arranged things that she had no past. She dared not refer to anything that happened to her, anyone she had known before last October; and, alas! the world's verdict would be, where there was so much secrecy there must of necessity be sin.

She was twenty-one, and what had she to look forward to? A life of long toil which could never have the joys which come to other women, even the poorest. For Alison there could be no dear friends—friends expect confidences—for Alison, no dreams of a home of

her own, and perhaps some day the caresses of little children.

Mrs. Spenser was very much taken with her beautiful guest, but she felt strangely anxious about her future.

Miss Hope volunteered nothing to her hostess about her past life. She was eager for work—any work, however humble—and the pleading look in her eyes as she spoke convinced the Spensers that she meant just what she said.

Mrs. Gardener's tongue had not been idle; she had contrived, without saying anything that could be taken hold of, to insinuate so much evil against Miss Hope that ladies in the neighbourhood were loath to engage her. One who was seeking a governess, point blank refused Mrs. Spenser's entreaty that she would at least see her *protégée*.

"You are so kind-hearted you are bound to be taken in," Mrs. Dalrymple said, frankly. "I have heard so much against this Miss Hope that I prefer to have nothing to do with her."

Mrs. Spenser made one more effort.

"We all know Mrs. Gardener is a very prejudiced woman," she said, gently. "It is surely hard to condemn my young friend simply because she objects to her."

"There's never smoke without fire," returned Mrs. Dalrymple; "besides, Miss Hope does seem a most mysterious person. I am told she simply dropped from the clouds; she came to Glen Rosa one day utterly unexpected. She professed to be seeking a Mrs. Eustace, who had gone to America months before, and when she heard this she dropped at Lady Hetherton's feet in a swoon. I don't like such melodramatic ways."

Mrs. Spenser went home quite disappointed, she had quite counted on getting this situation for her *protégée*, for Mrs. Dalrymple was a kind woman in the main, though a worldly one. Margaret Spenser hardly knew how to tell Miss Hope of her failure.

"You were too late," suggested Alison, one glance at her friend's face telling her the errand had been in vain.

"I was not too late, only Mrs. Gardener had been before me."

Alison turned to her friend with a look in her beautiful eyes like that sometimes seen in a hunted deer's.

"Will her malice pursue me always?" she asked, brokenly. "Heaven knows I have nothing left but my good name. Why should she try to steal that?"

Mrs. Spenser put one hand kindly on the girl's bowed head.

"Have you a mother, my dear child?" she asked, gently. "If not, will you let me speak to you as one? I am afraid you will never silence Mrs. Gardener's spite until you prove her slanders are false."

"But how can I?" asked Alison. "I assure you, Mrs. Spenser, I never did anything to annoy her. I was as careful not to offend her or her daughters as I could be. All my crime was, that Lady Hetherton took me to Beechcroft. But I had been included in the invitation; so how could I guess my presence was unwelcome?"

"But, dear, that is not what I mean. The Gardeners declare you are an adventuress in whom Lady Hetherton was utterly deceived. They even assert that you have no right to the name you bear. My dear, people who know you will never believe a word of this. The Rector and I will contradict it everywhere, but there will still be a great many outsiders who hear the slander and think it true. Let me have the name of someone who knew you before you went to Glen Rosa. Give me the power to say to your enemies, 'I know she is Miss Hope; her parents lived in such a town; she was educated at such and such a school!' Believe me, the time has come when something like this must be done. We will defend you with all our might, but don't you see dear, we can do it so much more effectually if we know your story."

White to her very lips was Alison. She did not doubt Mrs. Spenser's kindness, but she knew the lady had asked the very thing she could not do. With that dreadful secret in her life, how could she speak freely of the past?

Mrs. Spenser looked at her anxiously. She could not understand her reticence.

"Will you tell me?" she said, persuasively. "I will give you my word not to mention one word of what you say to anyone without your consent. I will be silent, even to my own husband."

"You will blame me," said Alison, sadly. "Indeed I found out my mistake when it was too late. Mrs. Spenser, I can't ask you to contradict what Mrs. Gardener says, because, though indeed I am innocent of the cruel charges she brings against me, it is quite true that—that Lady Hetherton took me into her house without references, and that Hope is not my real name."

The pretty boudoir seemed to swim round with the girl as she made her confession. She expected Mrs. Spenser's kindness to turn to indignant scorn; but there are some women tender-hearted enough to pity even where they cannot approve. The Rector's wife was one. She did not withdraw her hand from Alison's shoulder at that avowal; she said gently,

"Will you tell me all you can—so that I may understand better?"

"My father died last June," said Alison, and the break in her voice told how dearly that father had been loved, "and we were very poor. My mother got into difficulties; there were so many of us, and no son to help her, she would have been turned out of her house and her furniture sold, only—someone offered to help her with money if I—married him."

This was quite different from the tale Mrs. Spenser had feared to hear; she drew a breath of relief.

"And you could not care for him?"

"I promised to be his wife. Mother said I must go out into the world unless I did, but it was harder than I expected, and on my wedding-day I—ran away. The only friend I had was Mrs. Eustace. She had written to me when father died, and dated her letter from Glen Rosa. I never thought but what she lived there, and I went to her hoping she would find me a situation."

She paused; accidentally she had deceived Mrs. Spenser on a most important point. That lady understood her right to have been before the wedding ceremony; she regarded her as a girl who had run away to escape a hateful marriage, not as a fugitive wife. The mistake was not Alison's fault, but it served her in good stead, for Mrs. Spenser had very strong views of the sanctity of the marriage vow, and would certainly, had she known the truth, have tried to persuade the wanderer to return to her husband.

"And you told your story to Lady Hetherton?"

"I told her everything except my name and where we had lived. She said she would rather not know that. Indeed," went on the girl, wistfully, "I know, now, I made a fatal mistake; I ought never to have promised to marry him; but it was for the children's sake, I could not bear the thought of their suffering hardships."

"Won't you go back to your mother?" asked Mrs. Spenser. "It is nearly a year ago; don't you think she has forgiven you?"

"I can't go back to her; she would give me back to him. You see, he is rich, and mother would think that his money must make me happy. She has been so poor all her life she will not believe money can't do everything."

Mrs. Spenser sighed, she believed the story implicitly, but it only made her more anxious about the girl's future.

"What made you call yourself Alice Hope?"

"Lady Hetherton said I reminded her of a friend of that name; it was she who suggested my taking it."

Mrs. Spenser sighed, she felt utterly bewildered how to help the poor girl who seemed to have made such a desolation of her life.

"I don't know what to do," she said, slowly. "Lady Mary Dare, a great friend of mine has sent to ask us to lunch at Combe Lorraine tomorrow; it seems her son was struck by your resemblance to one of the family pictures, and she thinks it possible you may be a distant connection."

"I am quite sure I have no grand relations," said the girl, frankly; "my father was a music



teacher, my mother's family are in trade, any unknown relations I have would be homely, middleclass people."

"If you had been Alice Hope I should have thought it possible Lady Mary was right. I know the picture she refers to well; it is that of her stepmother the late Lady Lorraine; her maiden name was the same as that you bear, and as she was a governess before her marriage, her connections would not probably be either rich or grand."

"Alice Hope! Mrs. Spenser do you think she was the friend Lady Hetherington spoke of."

"Very possibly! Now, my dear, what are we to do? how can I take you to Combe Lorraine on purpose for Lady Mary to see if you are really related to her stepmother, when all the while I know your name is not Hope at all?"

Alison's heart sank, she was conscious of a strong wish to go to Combe Lorraine and make the acquaintance of Lionel's mother—but Mrs. Spenser's argument was unanswerable.

"I must not go," she said, gravely; "indeed I have no wish to deceive anyone, my only desire is to hide myself from my mother and all the people who used to know me. I have been here a month now and I am sure I must be trespassing on your great kindness. Don't you think I had better go to London to some Governesses' Home and try if they can find me a situation."

"No," said the older woman, kindly, "I think you had better stay with me until I find you a safe and comfortable home. Only, my dear, what you have told me makes just this difference, I shall give up trying to find you a situation with any personal friend; you will do far better away from this neighbourhood. I will advertise that I wish to recommend a young lady as governess. Mrs. Gardener has talked too much for my former plan to succeed, and unhappily now I cannot silence her."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a lovely June day when the Rector and his wife drove over to lunch at Combe Lorraine; after that they would make some calls further on, and Alison was not to expect them back till five or six.

"You must sit in the garden and try to enjoy yourself among the flowers," said Mrs. Spenser, kindly. "I only wish I could take you with us, but I am sure you would find Lady Mary's questions painful."

Probably, but Alison's heart ached a little as the time wore on, and she pictured the pleasant party at Combe Lorraine, and wondered if Captain Dare had ridden over to lunch, and whether he remarked her absence.

It was intensely hot, and Alison sat on a rustic bench under a shady tree on the Rectory lawn, her soft, white dress fastened by a broad, black sash, black ribbons on her shady hat, she had a book by her side, but she did not attempt to read, she had too much to think of; kind as Mrs. Spenser had been, Alison knew she could not linger much longer at the Rectory, she would soon have to move on.

The misery and sadness of those two words, always to "move on," always to be a stranger in other people's houses, a casual incident not a necessity of their lives! Alison wondered dreamily how many different families she would have to live in before death claimed her, and whether when she were dying and safe from all pursuit of earthly foes she might send for Barbara just to say goodbye; at least she might have her own name in death though she could never bear it again in life. Then she started as she remembered that Hilton was not her name now, she was truly Alison Chapman, and before she had got over the strangeness of this idea, she saw a tall form coming quickly across the grass, and felt her heart beats quicken as she recognised Lionel Dare.

"I made the servant let me announce myself," he said, as he took her hand and sat down beside her on the rustic bench.

"Miss Hope, why have you disappointed my

mother of your company? I quite expected to meet you at Combe Lorraine."

"I—I was obliged to stay at home," and she blushed furiously. "I was very sorry."

"So was I, I came over on purpose to see you and show you the old place; but on the whole I think we can talk better here, I have a great deal I want to say to you."

"To me!"

"Why not to you? we have always been friends ever since that morning in the train. I suppose counting by time I have known you a very little while, but it is quite enough to make me sure of my own heart. I have come here to-day to tell you that I love you with all my soul and strength, and to ask you to be my wife!"

His wife! And she was bound by a chain of her own forging to a man she hated. Every fibre of her heart echoed to Lal's words, she knew that she loved him just as he loved her, that at his side she could have borne sorrow and hardship, poverty and trouble, age and have been happy still, but—it was too late.

"I cannot, oh, I cannot!"

There was no mistaking the agony in her voice, this was no girlish shyness, no feeble scruple. Lionel knew that the barrier between them was one that seemed to her very grave and real, but he had no notion of giving up his wishes.

"Listen to me," he said solemnly. "Had Lady Hetherington lived, I would not have spoken to you so suddenly; I would have got her to invite me to Glen Rosa, and waited till I had taught you to care for me; but that fiend, Mrs. Gardener, has so worked matters that I fear you are not likely to remain in this neighbourhood long; I can't bear to lose you, and so I have risked all, and spoken now. Understand, I mean no lack of respect, it is not because you are so lonely and unprotected, my darling, that I have come to you so abruptly, it is because I want the right to fight your battles; I want to give you the shelter of my name, the protection of a husband's home and a husband's love."

"I know,"—oh the weariness of her voice,— "it is like you to care for one so lonely and friendless—but it cannot be."

"At least give me a reason; if I wait don't you think your heart would turn to me?"

"It is not that," she said hoarsely. "Oh, Captain Dare, be pitiful; don't ask me why, I cannot be your wife."

"It's not because I am far from rich," he said proudly. "Once you said money could do most things, but I'll not believe it's the love of money makes you send me away."

"No—oh, no! Oh, don't ask me more," she pleaded, "can't you believe me? it can never be."

"A man does not give up the hope of his life willingly," said Lal sadly, "though I never loved before, I lost my heart to you the first time I saw you, a slim, black-robed figure with a troubled face. We parted, I did not even know your name, but the memory of you always stood before me as my ideal wife, and when we met again—I began to hope. You can't want me to give up a love like this without a reason."

"I am not free!"

The words came from her hoarsely, they seemed almost forced from her against her will, and Lionel hearing them, made the same mistake as Mrs. Spenser had done the day before, he believed she was a *flâneur*, not a wife.

"And you care for him?"

"No; I regard him with terror and aversion; I would gladly never see his face again, but I am bound all the same."

"I don't understand—if you hate the fellow so why did you accept him?"

Alison's eyes blazed like fire.

"I told you once money was nearly all powerful, I meant just what I said; his money bought me. It wasn't for silks and satins and jewels I was sold. My mother was a widow with seven children, they wanted a roof over their heads, and fire, and food, and clothing. I could not give it them, I had no money; I sold the only thing I had—myself. I promised to marry a man I hated if he would provide for them."

Then came a dead silence; worn out by her agitation, Alison leant back on her seat the hot tears falling down her cheeks. Lionel sat beside

her, a mournful earnestness on his usually cheerful face; he had staked his whole heart on this girl's love and lost; she might have loved him had she been free, he felt it.

"Don't you think," he said at last, "if you told this man how you regarded him he would release you? however much he loves you he surely cannot want a wife who hates him."

"He cannot release me," she said in a strange, far off sort of voice, "only death can do that. Captain Dare, don't you understand—I am his wife."

It said something for the man's forbearance that he uttered no reproach; he sat in perfect silence, almost as though he had been stunned. She went on slowly, now that the ice was broken it seemed almost a relief to her to speak.

"That day you met me in the train I was going to London to see my uncle—he is rich—and ask him if he would give my mother the money she needed to get her out of this man's power; it was not much, a hundred pounds would have set her free, a very small allowance would have kept her and the children. I had to give my answer in two days' time; that journey to London was my last effort to escape my fate."

"And your uncle refused?"

"He refused utterly; I had gone to him full of mingled hope and fear, I came away in blank despair. I walked and walked as though I could not rest, and nothing but moving on and on could keep me from going mad. I'm not sure but what I was mad; I know I stood by the river and felt how gladly I would have ended my troubles in its cold embrace, only the thought of my dead father kept me from it. I think, Captain Dare, my youth, and hope, and gladness all died that day."

Lal's grasp tightened on her hand, his own trouble was swallowed up in intense pity for her.

"Go on, dear," he said gently, "tell me all."

"There's not much more. I was desperate, or I shouldn't have caught at such a slender hope as I found. In the train someone had dropped a nolette. I took it up and read it. I felt I must do something to drown my care. It was the story of a girl who disappeared on her wedding-day. I thought I had found a way of escape. I could marry him and leave him on our honeymoon!"

"And you did so?"

"I did so, within three hours of the wedding I left him. I have never seen him since; even now I'm glad of that; but, oh, it was an awful mistake. I'd better have begged the children's bread and my own too than have saved them at such a cost."

"You poor, poor child!" said Lal. "Was there no one to stretch out a friendly hand to save you. No one to warn you you were blighting your whole life?"

"No one—and you see what I've done. I have lost my home and relations, even my name—it's as though I'd died to everything and every one I loved, and yet my miserable self has to live on for years may be!"

He looked at her with a world of love battling at his heart. Her story had made her only dearer to him, but what could he do? she was a wife in name only, and yet while her husband lived she must never listen to a word of love, she must live from youth to age unloved, uncared for.

"Tell me your name," said Lal, suddenly; "don't leave me to think of you under a false one. What did your father call you?"

"Alison."

"Alison! It just suits you. Alison my darling, my lost love! this is the last time we can ever talk like this freely heart to heart, after to-day better for us if we never meet. I can't offer you my friendship, it isn't friendship I feel for you; and for a man who loves a woman as I love you, the pretence of friendship is impossible. Before we part to-day promise me one thing. If ever you are free let me know."

She did not answer, and he went on fiercely,—"It's not much to ask—by the right of our mutual love—and you do love me in your heart, Alison—I claim your promise, that if ever a time comes when you are free will you let me know?"

"You may be bound yourself then!"

"Never. I shall never have a wife unless it is yourself. Alison, don't refuse me the first boon I crave."

"If ever I am free I will let you know; but, Captain Dare, it is not likely. It is far more probable that I may find a refuge from my troubles and mistakes in death."

"You have promised to let me know," said Lionel, passionately. "Now, once more, if ever you need a friend, will you promise to send to my mother. I mean to tell her something; not all. Only that I love you, and have failed to win you. Alison, alone in the world, divided from all your former friends, your life must be beset by dangers. I can only add to them. A woman would be your best standby. Promise me you will ask my mother's help if ever you need it!"

Both were silent after the promise had been given. Both knew this was their last meeting on this familiar footing, and both were loth to speak the words that should be a signal for their parting.

"I shall exchange into a regiment on foreign service," said Lal gravely, "as soon as my uncle has found the heir of Combe Lorraine. I told you, you know, that I had an unknown cousin who, if he could be discovered, would cut me out of all claim to title and estate."

"And has he been found?" asked Alison, thinking how lightly Lal took his loss of fortune.

"No, but he is certainly alive. It is strange what a momentous day this is to me on all grounds, Alison. I have lost to-day not only my hopes of you, but my chance of one day being Earl of Lorraine!"

"Is your uncle pleased? If the unknown cousin has not appeared how can you tell he is alive?"

"My uncle has employed lawyers and detectives. He has spent money like water on the quest for nearly a year, and to-day is the first time he ever obtained the slightest clue, and that comes, oddly enough, not to him but to me. I had a letter from a country solicitor, a decent sort of fellow I should say for he made no demand for money, though extensive rewards have been offered for information. He just stated he thought it his duty to warn me that I was not the heir presumptive of Combe Lorraine, as my half uncle, George Dare, had left a child, in whose interests my correspondent was engaged to act on the Earl's death. It was a very business-like letter, and it has made Lord Lorraine feel positive his unknown nephew is a more reputable person than we expected. He has written to Mr. Chapman asking him to come to see him and bring the evidence of his client's claims."

"What name did you say?" asked Alison, faintly, "Chapman?"

"James Chapman, late of Oakhempstead. Alison—my darling, what is it?"

For with one deep-drawn sigh the girl had fallen forward, and now lay stretched on the grass before him perfectly unconscious both of her sorrows and her lover's presence.

(To be continued.)

THE presentation of a monster cheese to the Duke and Duchess of York had not the merit of originality which can be claimed by the little Alderney. Upon the occasion of Her Majesty's own marriage, the people of the Cheddar district elected to make a similar gift, and upon a certain day in the winter of 1839 all the neighbouring farmers contributed a day's milking, and the creamy produce of seven hundred and thirty-seven cows was combined and turned into a cheese, which weighed exactly half a ton, and was over nine feet in circumference. The Royal arms were impressed upon the top of the cheese, and it was enclosed in a handsome mahogany box. By the Queen's command it was left in the hands of the makers while ripening—a process which occasioned a considerable amount of delay in the actual presentation; and during this period it was publicly exhibited in Somersetshire, and also in London, and the sum which accrued, from admissions to view it, was applied to the benefit of the poor of the district in which it was manufactured.

## NORA'S HERO.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was shortly after ten o'clock when Jim Scarsby presented himself at the door of the stately residence of Miss Maidwell. He was still quite self-possessed, but there was something in his manner that told the servant he was not to be denied, when he said,—

"Say to Miss Maidwell that I wish to see her. Tell her that it is important."

He gave his card to the servant, but the man demurred.

"She is not at home—"

But there was not time given for the completion of the sentence.

"She will see me," Scarsby interrupted. "Take her the card and the message."

There was no longer any hesitation; the man did as he had been bidden. He returned almost at once with the information that "Mr. Scarsby could come up."

In silence he followed the servant to the *boudoir* where he had been before, and passing the man, he entered and closed the door without the permission of his handsome hostess.

She was standing looking from a window as he entered; but she turned quickly at the sound of the closing door, an expression of surprise and not unalloyed pleasure darkening her eyes.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Scarsby?" she asked, coldly.

"Yes, madam," he answered, not in the least confused by her lack of hospitality. "I have some news for you, and I presumed to come without your permission, because there was no time to be lost."

"Indeed? What is it?"

There was a slight show of interest then upon the part of the young woman. She even took a step in his direction and stood with her hand upon the back of a chair. She did not ask him to sit, as she had done upon a former occasion, a fact which was not altogether lost upon Scarsby. He stood there with his hat in his hand and his eyes fixed upon her handsome face, much more at his ease than he had been when he had had his last conversation with the lady.

"It is about—Miss Colson," he said, quietly.

"You remember her, of course?"

"The young lady in whom I have been interested?" she drawled, indifferently.

"Ex-actly," he answered, with something of an imitation of her manner—"Miss Nora Colson, the actress."

"Yes, I remember. What of her?"

"She is ill—very ill."

"Indeed? I am sorry; but really I can do nothing further. You understand that? I did not know that you were interested in her, and—"

"I was not, Miss Maidwell, until I heard that she was ill. But I am interested now, and I hoped I might interest you, because it was through us, Miss Maidwell, that she is ill—perhaps dying."

The young woman's face hardened.

"I think you forget yourself, Mr. Scarsby," she said, icily. "I have felt sorry for the girl, and for that reason I did what lay in my power for her and for her mother. I don't think I can be expected to do more. Still, if she is really ill and in need of financial—"

An expression of disgust which he did not try to conceal crossed the man's brow. He interrupted her by a little wave of the hand.

"It is not money that Miss Colson needs," he said, in a quiet tone—"at least, I have never heard that she does. It is perfectly absurd of you, Miss Maidwell, to attempt to make me believe that it was out of charity that you did what you have for Nora Colson. I understand it all perfectly, and—"

"Sir, if you grow impertinent I shall be forced to have you ejected, and that—"

"Would be a very foolish thing for you to do. Pray listen to me for a moment. It can do you no possible good to antagonise me, and may be the worst day's work of which you were ever guilty."

I have not come here to threaten you nor to betray you. I have simply come to entreat you to do a womanly thing. If you refuse to listen to me—if you refuse to follow my advice—I shall force you to do it. Don't make me do that, Miss Maidwell—I should be so sorry. I want you to see this matter as I do, and I don't want to have to speak roughly to you; but if you compel me to do it, I think I shall prove myself capable of the task."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this. You and I, between us, have been guilty of a very mean act—I, for money, you, for love. Now, what I propose is, that we both undo the harm that we have worked. I will give back the money that you paid me, and you give back the lover that you have stolen from Nora Colson."

"Sir?"

"Getting on your dignity won't do, Miss Maidwell. It is too late for that. Don't think me such a fool that I don't understand it all perfectly. You knew that Mr. Chester was madly in love with Miss Colson, and you knew that he was on the point of sacrificing everything to make her his wife. You sat down and calmly thought it all out. You knew the weak spot in his nature—his pride. You went to work to discover how you could touch that most keenly, and you found out, through me, about that wretched mother of Miss Colson being in prison. You had her released, then you proceeded to tempt her and get her drunk. There! You need not trouble to deny it. I know all about it, and can prove every word that I say when the time comes. After you had got her drunk you took the time when you knew that Chester was with his sweetheart, and you sent the woman there. You knew what the result would be, and you planned it with infernal accuracy. Now, I can prove every word of that if you want me to do so. It would not be a pretty story to go to Kenward Chester, would it?"

Miss Maidwell's face had turned from white to scarlet, and from scarlet back to white again. Her eyes were blazing with wrath; but she was sufficiently clear of brain to understand that she was in the power of this man. He had struck too closely home for her to doubt that he had the proof of all that he said.

"Even if what you say were true," she exclaimed, "I did it to save him."

"Perhaps," returned Scarsby, dryly. "And did your Christian desire to save him induce you to promise to become his wife within twenty-four hours after? My dear Miss Maidwell, we are all actuated by selfish motives in this world. You wanted Chester because you were in love with him. That is natural, and I should say nothing if you had taken a fair means to get him; but you have not done so. You took the meanest method that lay in your power. I was actuated by the desire for money. I am a professional detective, but that does not make me entirely heartless. The money has not been able to quiet my conscience, and when I heard that the poor girl was lying at the door of death, I said: 'Old fellow, it is not worth it. Are you going to have that girl's life on your hands for the sake of a few pounds? Are you going to feel yourself a murderer to the last day of your life for the sake of a new suit of clothes?' No, Miss Maidwell, I can't do it."

Angela looked at him earnestly, searchingly. A crimson fire glowed in either cheek. There was a long pause, and then, summoning a smile to her lips, she motioned him to a chair.

"Sit down," she said, quietly.

She took a chair opposite him, and after another little pause, she leaned forward, never removing her eyes from his.

"I think you have aroused yourself foolishly over this affair," she said, steadily. "Miss Colson will not die. She is a clever actress, you know, and being quite aware of Mr. Chester's weakness for her, she is simulating this illness in order to bring him back to her. Now, why not wait awhile? If she is really ill, his return could do no good, and if she is playing it, she will have ample opportunity to act out the farce. And, in the meantime, if you should care to take a trip abroad, to see something of the world and take a



little rest from your profession, there are a thousand or two in the bank that you might as well utilize as not."

Scarsby arose. He gave his disgust free play in voice and expression.

"No, madam!" he exclaimed. "Your whole bank account couldn't buy me to let that girl die. I have spent part of the money which you gave me, and at this moment it is impossible for me to return it to you, but I shall do so in time. And I command you—mark you, Miss Maidwell, I command you—to set Kenward Chester free! You cannot make him propose to the girl whose life he has ruined, but you can set no barrier between them. You have my ultimatum, and no money can buy me from it. You may be able to calm your own conscience, but mine cannot be stupefied with gold. Don't let there be any mistake. Give Chester his freedom. Tell him that you are aware that there is another whom he loves, and that you cannot take the second place in his heart. Do not on any account allow him to recognise any tie between you, and I promise that I will remain silent about our little transaction; but refuse, and I shall tell him the whole thing. Whom do you think he would choose, a girl whose only sin is in having a mother with a weakness for drink, or a woman who is capable of such an act as you have committed?"

She had not time to reply to his question, even had she so desired, when her maid entered, after a quick knock upon the door.

"Mr. Chester is down stairs, Miss Maidwell," she said, quietly.

"Tell him that I will join him," answered Miss Maidwell, and the maid retired.

"I will leave you," said Scarsby. "This is your opportunity. Set him free, and you may retain his respect; refuse, and you lose everything. Kindly send me word, at the old address, what your decision has been, and don't delay it any longer than his visit lasts. Good-morning, Miss Maidwell."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

MISS MAIDWELL did not descend at once to the room where Kenward awaited her, after the departure of Jim Scarsby.

She stood almost in the same spot that he had left her, staring almost stupidly from the window. One hand rested upon the back of a chair, the nails of the other were between her teeth. She did not gnaw them. There was absolutely no evidence of emotion in her manner.

She stood there as motionless as a statue for a moment, and then a little sigh fluttered from between her lips.

"And so it is all done," she said, slowly. "I have sold my own self-respect; I have sinned beyond pardon; I have earned the contempt of a common creature like James Scarsby, and for what? Nothing! In the very moment of success I must abandon the man for whose sake I have dared all this, not because my conscience has called me to account, not because I lack courage to continue in evil-doing, but because my accomplice commands it! Well, is not the punishment just? Have I not deserved it? For years I have planned and schemed, for years I have tricked and sinned to become his wife, and now, now I must give him up because that girl, who has cared so little for him by comparison, is lying ill, perhaps dying. It may be that she will die; it may be that I can—Oh! to what depth of sin have I not sunk when a thought like that can come to me! I am worse even than I believed. I must go to him. I dare not stay and think longer, or Heaven knows what sin and shame may come to me!"

She was trembling then. She glanced furtively about her, as if she expected to see beside her the hideous spectre of temptation. She was afraid to linger longer there in the silence of her handsome boudoir, and catching up her skirts, she fled from further communion with her own heart. She was afraid of herself, afraid of her own reflections; and almost without realising it, she was yielding herself to the situation, without plans for the future.

She found herself in a trap, and she saw but

one egress from it. That was through the death of Nora Colson, and she dared not contemplate that.

With swift steps she descended the stairs and entered the presence of Kenward Chester.

In her heart she felt that it was the last time that his lips would ever touch hers. She felt that it was the last time his arms would ever encircle her waist. It was worse than death to her, because she knew that she was resigning him to another; but, like the Spartan boy, there was a smile upon her lips as she lifted them to his.

He bent his head and kissed her.

She felt the lack of passion in it; she felt the lack of warmth in the arm that lay about her shoulders, and the contact became horrible to her. She shivered as she withdrew herself from him, and a curious light glittered in her feverish eyes.

"You are making me an early call," she said, with a little laugh that jarred upon him hatefully.

"It is so good of you, Ken!"

"Selfish of me, I am afraid, Angela," he said, earnestly. "The fact is that I had not thought of the hour. Have you been to breakfast?"

"Why, of course, you silly boy! Do you think I am so lazy, then?"

"No; only a little butterfly of fashion, who turns the day into night, and the night into day. Well, we all do that, more or less. But you are not looking so well this morning, dear."

"Neither are you. You are worn and haggard. Has anything happened to disturb you, Ken?"

He coloured slightly and wearily lifted the hair from his temple; then he leaned forward and took a ribbon from her gown into his hand and nervously turned the corners of it.

"Yes, dear," he answered, after a long pause.

"I did not go to sleep at all last night, and I confess that something has happened to disturb me very seriously. I have come to tell you of it, Angela, and now that I am here, I don't know how I am to begin."

She looked at him curiously. Had he also come to tell her of Nora Colson's illness?

"I am always interested in what interests you, Ken," she faltered.

"I know it, Angela, and that makes it all the harder. It is so bitterly cruel! Ah! I wish you could help me. I shall seem like such a scoundrel to you—such a coward; and your good opinion is of such value to me, Angela, that I can not bear to lose it. I am in great trouble, dear, and—"

He was not looking at her, but at the ribbon with which he still toyed. The fear in her eyes had grown to horror, but she closed her hands tightly so that the pain of the cutting nails was apparent to her, and it seemed to give her strength.

"Wait," she said, her voice a trifle choked; "let me help you. Don't ask me any questions, Ken, but let me speak in my own way. You have come to tell me—of the—severe illness of—a friend of yours—have you not?"

He glanced up quickly at her. He would have taken her hand, but she drew back from him nervously, almost with terror. Her eyes looked so queer that they frightened him, but he only replied, in a low tone,—

"Yes, Angela."

He was almost breathless, and after a little pause she said, in a voice still more hoarse, still more choked,—

"And you have not the courage to tell me that—you love—her better than me! Is not that it, Ken?"

"Angela," he cried, "why do you put it so cruelly? Why—"

"It is true, is it not?"

"Yes," he answered, his eyes dropping.

She sighed.

"The cruelty lies in the truth, not in the framing of it," she said, unsteadily. "But, after all, you cannot help it, Ken, nor can I! But let us go on. You came to tell me that, and then to ask me for—your release. Is not that it?"

"Yes."

He said the word slowly, hesitatingly, but she felt a shiver pass through her. For a moment

she feared that she was going to faint, but by a powerful effort she forced the blood through her heart again. She did not speak for a moment, because she could not, but when she did, her voice was calmer than it had been before.

"Do you think that I would hold you to a bond from which you wish to be free, Ken?"

"No, Heaven knows I do not!" he cried, earnestly. "Do you think me so filled with conceit as that. I know that you must loathe, despise me. Ah, how could you help it? I know that I despise myself for my own cruel weakness, and you must—"

"But I don't, Ken. I am not ashamed now in this hour to confess that I love you; I am not ashamed to say that the bitterest trial of my whole life is to give you up. I shall not attempt to conceal from you in this hour what I suffer; but you are free, dear—as free as the air."

"My dear Angela, what—"

"There I don't say it, dear. If you were to get upon your knees, if you were to swear to me that it is I you love, and I alone, I—could not accept you—now. You must go to her, Ken, and tell her that you are my—sacrifice, which will bring her back to life. Let me make a confession to you, dear, now while I have the strength. This is my punishment, because I knew at the time that you asked me to be your wife that you loved her best; and—forgive me, Ken—I knew why your choice fell upon me, and not upon her. It is my punishment for accepting what did not belong to me by right of love, and I must bear it."

"Angela, you are an angel!"

She shrunk back and her face grew as white as death; then a little wan smile drew her lips.

"Am I?" she asked. "I don't believe you know much about angels, Ken. But I am going to ask you to do me a favour now. That is—to go. I want to be alone. And, Ken—will you kiss me, just once?"

He took her in his arms and pressed his lips upon hers. It seemed to him that there was no woman in all the world so full of honour as she, and he kissed her as he might have done a saint.

She seemed to understand it, for a great sob filled her soul. She felt that she was losing her self-control, and slipping from his arms, she left him without another word and tottered from the room.

She had regained something of her lost composure when she reached her boudoir, and closing the door, she sat down at once to her dainty escritoire and wrote,—

"I leave for Paris by the first steamer. Your desire is accomplished  
"A. M."

She addressed it to J. Scarsby, Esq., and then rang for her maid.

"See that this note is sent at once," she said, quietly, "and then go yourself and ask Mrs. Landon to come to me. When you have returned you may pack at once. We leave for Paris the day after to-morrow."

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN Kenward left the house of the girl who had forced herself into the position of his fiancée, and retained it for so short a time, he walked down the street with bent head, but with quick and unflinching step. He was angry with himself, angry and disgusted that he ever could have allowed himself to be placed as he had been that day.

"I have acted like a coward and a fool," he told himself. "What right had I, what right has any man to allow himself to be betrayed into an action so dishonourable as mine has been? I ask a woman to be my wife one day, and entrust a release the next. Pooh! I don't deserve anything but to be turned from the doors of any woman, in the name of decency. But how like an angel she acted, and how little I have appreciated Angela after all! Heigh-ho! I am growing to think that we are none of us good

enough for them. When a girl loves a man well enough to give him up like that, taking the embarrassing words out of his mouth, and speaking them for him—By Jove! I wonder how many of the male sex there are in the world who would have acted as nobly and unselfishly. After all, the heroism of the world is to be found in woman. We men are nothing but selfish brutes, and not worthy of one of their lightest thoughts."

And so he mused as he walked along, regretting his action so far as Angela was concerned, as only a man of the highest sense of honour can regret an action like that, neither knowing nor suspecting anything of her unworthiness.

"After all, it is better so," he said to himself, as he walked rapidly down the block to the home of his real love. "I did not deserve Angela, and I should have done her an infinitely greater wrong to have married her with my heart and soul filled with another, than I have done in breaking the engagement. Well, the chapter is ended; I am the standard-bearer of love. For woe or woe I have chosen, and I mean to be a man at last and stand by the choice. I love Nora with all my heart, and her burdens shall be mine."

He walked even more swiftly after that, and brought up almost with a start as he stopped suddenly in front of the house in which she lived. His heart beat almost suffocatingly. It was the first time that he had ever entered there as her betrothed husband. True, she had not promised to be his wife; but he meant to take her and wear her as the most sacred treasure with which Heaven had ever intrusted him.

"She shall be mine," he said to himself, with a smile, forgetting Angela in the joy of again seeing Nora. "She shall be mine by the right of my great love. I will take no denial, and then I shall devote my whole life to the bliss of making her happy, my beautiful—I beg your pardon!"

He had come in collision with some one in the dark hall as he was hurrying to her room, and his eyes being unaccustomed to the darkness, he could not quite discern who it was.

"Is it you, Miss Hart?" he asked. "Mrs. Green ought to have some gas in this hall, or—Oh!"

He had suddenly realized that it was not Miss Hart who stood there, but in her stead he recognized—Mrs. Colson.

He stopped. His face went from crimson to white, and back again. He scarcely knew what he was to say to her, and before he had recovered himself, she placed her hand lightly on his arm, and in a low tone said,—

"Nora is sleeping now, Mr. Chester. It is best that she should not be disturbed. Will you not come in here for a moment? I wish to speak to you."

Could that be the same woman whom he had seen but a day or two previous? He could believe it readily enough from looking at her, for the evidences of dissipation were still there, perfectly apparent even in that darkened hall; but there was a certain refinement in the voice that startled him.

He did not reply to her in words, but bowed with the courtesy of a prince, and followed where she directed.

She led him into the little room that she had appropriated to her own use, and shut the door behind them. Then she motioned him to a chair, and sat in the one opposite, with her hands folded in her lap.

She looked up at him, and somehow he forgot the dissipated look in her face in watching the sadness of it—a sadness which seemed to touch some inner chord of his better self. And then the silence became unbearable, and he broke it.

"How is Nora?" he asked. "Has she been sleeping since I left?"

"I did not know that you had been here."

How strangely the voice sounded to him!

"Yes," he answered, almost absently, "I was here last night, or, rather, this morning. It was daybreak when I left."

"I did not know. She has been awake since, but sleeps again."

"Then she is better, I take it?"

"I hope so, I think so."

"Thank Heaven for that!"

The woman leaned forward and looked at him earnestly. The gaze gave him such a curious sensation. The expression seemed so familiar; yet so strangely unfamiliar.

"You love Nora?" she said to him, after a little pause, half in interrogation, half assertion.

"Yes," he answered, simply.

"I thought so," she said, with a sigh of relief. "I have asked you to come here in order that I might say a few words to you, sir, and now—It is painfully embarrassing. Mr. Chester, I have discovered a trait in my character within the last comparatively few hours that I thought I had lost with my youth and innocence. It was—heart. I have found that I have one, and the sensation is not a pleasant one. You will pardon me, I am sure, if I omit all those things which I should say as a prologue, and let me go into the subject at once. I am painfully weak. Mr. Chester, you love Nora, and—and she loves you. There is one barrier to your marriage, and but one—her mother. Ah, sir, I want to see my child happy. I want to see her life saved; I do not blame you—you must not think I do—for not asking her to be your wife, with such a mill-stone around her neck as I am. No man would risk a burden like that for the sake of any woman—"

"Nevertheless," he interrupted, with a certain gentleness, "I have come here to-day feeling myself the betrothed husband of your daughter, Mrs. Colson, and I shall continue to regard myself as such until she shall forbid it."

She did not reply at once. Tears sprang to her eyes and choked her utterance. She struggled them back, but she could not control the tremor in her voice as she said, softly,—

"God bless you, sir. My Nora has won a noble lover. But there is something else that I have to say, sir. I—I beg that you will not think I am making a promise which I intend to break. I need not say it, you know, if I did not mean it, for you have already said that you intend to make Nora your wife. I want you to know that neither you nor she shall ever be distressed with me again. I shall go away as soon as I know that she is out of danger of death, and happy, and you shall never even hear of me again."

There was something so humble, so pathetic in the simple words, that Chester felt his eyes moisten. She had made no effort whatever at dramatic effect. The words had been most commonplace; but there was nothing of that kind in her voice or manner. She was striving to be calm, and the very effort was one of the most pitiful things Kenward had ever remembered to have witnessed.

When she had ceased speaking, he drew his chair nearer to her, and leaning forward, he took her hand.

"Why is that necessary?" he asked. "There is no reason why you should be a burden to either Nora or me. Is rum so much more to you than your children, Mrs. Colson, that you cannot give it up for their sake?"

"I shall never drink again."

"Do you mean that?"

"As Heaven is my judge, I do!"

"Then why not remain? Why not share the place in my heart that is occupied by my own mother? It is open to you. I love your daughter too well not to love you also. Stay with us, Mrs. Colson. Be the woman that your voice tells me you can be. Let us forget the past, and begin again in the light of happiness and love!"

She was sobbing then. He slipped his arm about her shoulders and drew her slightly towards him. But she shrunk away, trembling.

"No, no!" she moaned. "It is better not, much better. The world—you cannot make the world forget."

"The world is not my master. Nora will need change of air and scene. Go away with us. We will be gone for years, perhaps, and when we return, if we ever do, people will have forgotten. They cannot always remember, you know."

"There is but one thing in life that remains for ever unburied, Mr. Chester. That is error."

"Then let them remember, if they will; I care not. My home is yours, Mrs. Colson, your most welcome home, so long as rum remains a stranger

there. Come to us. I entreat it in the name of both your children, and I promise that you shall find in me a son as dutiful as any you might have known in a happier life than this has been. You see I am not afraid to trust you. Are you more afraid to trust me?"

She fell upon her knees there beside him, her heart too choked to emit tears, and pressed the hem of his trousers to her lips.

He lifted her gently and replaced her in her chair.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

KENWARD had scarcely recovered his position when a gentle knock sounded upon the door. He answered it himself.

It was one of the nurses whom he had seen the night before.

"Miss Colson has heard your voice, sir," she said, "and is asking for you."

He turned and looked at Mrs. Colson with a smile in his eyes.

"You heard, did you not?" he said. "Nora is asking for me. I am going to her now; but remember that it is your son who is leaving you, your son who will return to you. If you should leave us now, I should feel that it was I who had exiled you, and there would never be another happy day for me. If she asks for you, you will be here, will you not?"

"I shall be like a faithful dog, ever lying at her door," she answered, brokenly.

"No; like a loving mother awaiting the fretful call of her sick child," he corrected, almost tenderly. "But keep your promise to us, and there shall be no happier family than ours."

He leaned over and kissed her cheek, regardless of the lines of dissipation that marked them, and then followed the nurse who had returned to Nora's room.

He stood there on the threshold for a single instant, looking at the sweet face upon the pillow. She turned her head towards him and smiled. The look of recognition almost frightened him. He gave a little, quickly-suppressed cry, then crossed to her swiftly. He knelt by her side and took her in his arms.

"You know me, Nora?" he asked, tenderly.

She smiled her answer.

He turned to the nurse, almost in bewilderment.

"What does it mean?" he asked. "Is it not most unusual for her to regain consciousness so soon?"

"It would be," answered the woman, with a smile that was tremulous, "if the doctor had diagnosed her case correctly; but apparently he did not. We none of us can exactly understand it all, and shall not until the doctor comes. She awakened this morning perfectly rational. There was considerable fever, but she went to sleep again almost at once, and has slept peacefully. Her temperature is not quite normal now, nor is her pulse; but you see that, although very weak, she is still perfectly rational."

"Thank God for it!" murmured Kenward, fervently. "I feel that your care has saved her life, and I cannot be sufficiently grateful. Miss Colson is my future wife."

He knew that she heard and understood from the quiver that passed through her body, but he did not look at her just then.

"I congratulate you, sir," the nurse said, with evident pleasure. "If you don't object, I will leave you here with her for a few moments. There is a matter which requires my attention, and I want to send a message to the doctor. If you should need me, just touch that bell. But I must warn you, sir, before I go, that she is to be in no way excited."

"I understand that, and you need not be afraid to trust me."

He smiled into the kindly eyes as she left the room.

And then he and Nora were alone together.

He turned and touched the hot lips with his own.

"My own sweetheart!" he murmured. "It is not just like the play in which you have made your fame, dear one; but like the hero, I have



secured my prize at last. Nora, darling, I have, without your permission, asked your mother's consent to our marriage."

"My mother's—"  
"Our mother's, dear; and she has given it to me. There! You heard the nurse say that I must not excite you. You have been very ill, sweet one, and you are not out of danger now, so that you must not talk. This is one occasion—perhaps the only one that will ever come to me—when I shall talk without interruption or contradiction. You are not to say one word, but just listen to me. You love me, Nora? There! you need not bother to say anything. I know you do. Oh, my dear, you told me all about it while you were ill!"

"I am afraid you knew it before," she said, feebly.

"Well, perhaps I suspected it very strongly. Ah, darling, I wonder if you can ever forgive me! Certainly I can never forgive myself. I have been so selfish, so careless of your happiness, and so thoughtless for myself alone! I don't deserve your love, Nora; but Heaven knows I have suffered! My punishment has been very hard to bear. Is it enough, dearest? Will you accept the devotion of my life to compensate for all the grief that I have brought into yours?"

"Why do you say this? You know that I can not! You know that I can not bring shame into your life and—"

"There! there! Now you are doing just what the nurse said you should not do; you are exciting yourself. I told you that you were not to speak. Listen, darling; there is nothing in our future but happiness; there is not a cloud even so big as the smallest hand upon our horizon. I have not asked you to be my wife; I have simply taken you; and just as soon as you are sufficiently well to bear the excitement of it, I am going to have a clergyman come here to this dear little room, where I have known the happiest moments of my life, and make you mine as tight and fast as the law and the church can do it. Now, do you understand? There is to be no demurring. You see, fortunately, I know you love me. That settles everything."

"But—"  
"There are to be no 'buts' about it, and you are not to speak. You are to be the only one who is not to be consulted in this wedding. Let me tell you this, Nora, and see if it will make you as happy as it has me. I have talked with your mother—Mind you are to be as quiet as can be."

"Yes."  
"Well, she volunteers the promise to me that she will not drink another drop as long as she lives."

"What?"  
"There, now! I shall never forgive myself for mentioning this to you, if—"

"Joy never kills. Ken, tell me."  
He kissed the lips from which his name had issued, and holding her so closely that he could feel every throb of her heart, he said,—

"She told me that if I desired it, she would go away where neither of us should ever hear of her again. Of course, I would not listen to that; but she promises that she will never touch another drop, and I believe her."

"Thank Heaven for that!"  
"You do not doubt, dear?"

"No. She has never made a pledge before."

"Ah! Then we will take her with us when we go abroad, and let new scenes wipe out temptation."

"How good you are!"  
"A selfish man is always good to himself."

"Selfish! What are you not sacrificing for me?"

"Nothing under heaven. I am making myself the happiest man alive, that is all."

"And I? Ah! surely there is not an angel in heaven so happy as I. Think, Ken! think of the change, the dear, blessed change that you have brought into my life! The day that you found me, what was I? An ignorant, sullen, hopeless and helpless girl, with but one good in her heart or soul, and that love of her sister; disgraced, filled with shame and humiliation at the acts of her mother. Then see me now: happy, loved,

loving, and all through you. You have not been satisfied with all that, but you have given her—my mother—back to me. Ken, all my life could not repay you for this."

He smoothed the golden hair back from her brow, and as one might soothe a child, he said to her,—

"But, you see, I am not satisfied with your life alone, my dearest. I am demanding your heart as well."

"Not demanding, because you have already received. But there is another thing that you have not thought of, dear: your mother."

"Oh, yes, I have. She has given her consent. In fact, dear heart, she volunteered it. She expressed her intention this morning of calling upon her new daughter as soon as you were well enough to receive her. I am the bearer of every kind and loving message from her, Nora."

"And she knows—everything?"

"Everything."

"I can scarcely believe in my own good fortune. It seems that I must be dreaming. I am too happy for it to last. Does Lu know, Ken?"

"Not yet, darling."

"Won't you bring her and let us tell her?"

"I will do better than that, love. There is another who is praying for a word of forgiveness from your lips, one who suffers untold agonies because of the past. Won't you see her, dear? Won't you say just one word of love and hope to her? I will go to Lu, little one; and will you not let me send your mother to you?"

She looked up at him and smiled faintly.

"You always know what is wisest and best."

He kissed her lips as he released her.

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

It was May-day in "Merrie England." The sun had never shone more brightly even in balmy Italy. It was the opening of the season in Hyde Park, and Rotten Row was crowded with the *déité* of London.

Society seemed never to have turned out in greater numbers nor in more gala attire. There were dukes and princes and marquises by the score, some riding their swagger horses, and others indulging in the more moderate exercise of driving, but all attesting their enjoyment of the delicious atmosphere, and of the scene by hearty laughter and an animation in their conversation in which English people seldom indulge.

The faces of the women were glowing with health, and the magnificent forms of the men had rarely if ever shown to greater advantage.

It was a day devoted to pleasure and happiness, and there was not a countenance to be seen that did not express its own share in the perfect enjoyment of the occasion.

Even the pedestrians and those seated upon the rustic chairs and benches provided seemed to have banished all envy for the time, and admired the beautiful faces and beautiful gowns, not to speak of the magnificent specimens of horseflesh that bore their part so prominently in the pageant.

Along in the line of carriages, drawn by as handsome horses as could be seen in all that goodly array, and with a coachman and footman in fullest livery, came an equipage which attracted more than usual attention for its almost unique beauty combined with good taste. But the turnout did not monopolize the attention, for it had barely been observed by those who had come to see, when the occupants distracted them from the love of the beautiful horses to the love of the beautiful woman that it contained.

There were three others beside herself in the conveyance, but people did not seem to realize that fact as they gazed upon her exquisite face.

"Who is she?" they asked one another. "Can it be the new Duchess of Rainforth?"

"No, that is Kenward Chester with her—an actor," he said, "and she is his wife. At the time they were married the papers said he had married the most beautiful woman in—shire."

"By Jove! it must be true, you know," said the first speaker, "for I don't think any county could turn out another such. She is perfect!"

But Nora, by her husband's side, drove onward, unconscious of the sensation she was creating.

She was happy—as happy as she deserved to be; and that is saying all that one can—in the love of a perfect husband. Beside her her mother sat, so changed that the most intimate friend she possessed in the olden time would not have recognized her, and on the seat in front, by Ken's side, was Lu, grown almost beyond recognition also, in the two years that had elapsed.

Her erect position gave evidence of the alteration in her physical condition. When she walked there was still a little limp, so slight as to be almost unnoticeable; but when she stood, no one would ever have dreamed that she had been a cripple during the early years of her life. There is not a shadow upon her beautiful brow, singularly like her sister's, and the manner in which she glances at her brother-in-law tells its own story of love, even devotion.

"By the way, Lu," he says to her, in the same old teasing, loving way that he had used when she was a little child and had called him the fairy prince, "I had a letter from Castleton to-day—guess whom it was from."

He saw the colour rush into her face, and the smile deepened upon his lips.

"How can I guess?" she asked. "You have so many friends in Castleton, you can't expect me to go through the whole list, can you?"

"No; because you could guess the very first trial. Ned! Yes, Ned, my little fairy. Ned is nineteen, now, isn't he?" rather musingly. "He is doing wonderful things, he writes, and is studying hard. I should not be surprised to see him a great lawyer one day, particularly now that his father is dead and he has no longer a mill stone round his neck. I must show you his letter."

"Yes, do; I should like to see it so much!"

He laughed slightly, teasingly.

"Unfortunately, I have not it with me, and therefore cannot allow you to make a picture of yourself for the May revellers to gaze upon. I say, Nora, do you know, I sometimes think I have clairvoyant powers!"

"Do you?" asked his wife, looking at him affectionately. "What is it you think you can predict?"

"It is so far away in the future that you may have time to forget my prediction if I make it now; but I think I shall risk that, for I can assume the prerogative of womankind when the time comes, and say, 'I told you so!' This time I am going to predict that away off in the future, when Ned shall have taken a degree, and made his first successful speech at the bar, and all England is applauding her young scion for his logic and his eloquence, after all that has taken place, I say, it is my humble opinion that—well, that Ned will suddenly blossom into—our brother-in-law! What do you think of that?"

He did not look at Lu, but she knew that he was laughing at her, and the colour rushed madly into her cheeks.

Then for the first time Mrs. Colson spoke.

"There is nothing in the world that could give me greater happiness!" she exclaimed. "Ned is one of nature's own noblemen, and, after all, that is the greatest thing to be considered in life. I shall never forget his kindness to the girls when they needed kindness most. You and he, Ken, were the only friends that they ever knew, or that I ever knew."

"Thank Heaven, they don't need friends now! How happy every one looks!" he exclaimed, more to relieve Lu of the embarrassment that he had brought upon her than for any other purpose. "Isn't it delicious? Even Nature has lent a helping hand in making the day a success. I wonder if all the joy we see in the faces surrounding us can be real?"

"If it is as real as our own, they could know no greater joy in heaven!" cried Nora, the tears of gladness coming to her eyes.

She put out her hand and clasped her mother's in silence, and a smile, tremulous and near to tears, but still supremely happy, answered her. Kenward saw the look, and his heart thrilled with happiness.

"What a perfect party we are!" he exclaimed. "There is but one presence that could add to our

perfect pleasure, apart from Ned's, and that is my mother. By the way, Nora, she said in her last letter that she was coming over to visit us if we were not going to return at once, and as we have no intention of doing that for sometime, I think I shall write her to come. What do you say?"

"Do so, by all means. I should be more delighted than I can ever tell you. The only thorn in my side that I have known since our marriage has been the fact of my having separated you from your mother. I shall be so glad!"

He saw that the tears were coming to her eyes again, and not wishing to see them there, even when they indicated happiness, he said,—

"And do you think the two mothers-in-law will manage to agree?"

Mrs. Colson leaned forward and looked at him earnestly.

"If I thought that my presence was keeping her from you, I should go at once," she said, quietly. "When you write her, Ken, I wish you would say, for me, that it is my greatest wish that she should come. Say to her that I love her because of the happiness that her dear son has brought to my daughter; and say to her that I am waiting to welcome her with—with all a sister's love."

If the message seemed to him peculiar, he made no mention of the fact; but in his next letter to his mother he repeated it to her as nearly as he could remember it.

Her reply he read aloud to his wife and Mrs. Colson.

"Say to your other mother," she wrote, "that I thank her with all my heart for the kind and loving message that she has sent me. Say to her that nothing could have given me greater happiness, and that one of the dearest pleasures that I shall know in joining my son and daughter again will be in her association. Tell her that I understand the message, and that I will express my thanks to her when I am reunited to all those I love most on earth."

And then later in the letter he read aloud again,—

"You may be interested to know that I heard from Angela the other day. I am greatly disappointed in her."

"She has followed the rule of the world, however, and done only what fashion dictates. She has married old Sir Richard Fenn."

"You surely remember him. He is seventy-five, if a day, but still rules the social world by right of his millions. Angela wrote as if she were happy. *O tempora! O mores!*"

[THE END.]

## A MOMENTOUS DECISION.

—10:—

MURIEL GLOVER was in a deep quandary. Her aunt, Mrs. Harcourt, was working an embroidery pattern at the opposite end of the room. On a stand in front of Muriel lay a necklace of pearls, and a simple white rose.

The rose and the pearls were each accompanied with a separate note. They had both been presented to her by special messengers within the last half-hour.

"DEAR MURIEL:—Will you wear this rose on your bosom, this evening, if there is any room for hope for one who loves you truly and devotedly!"

"MARK RAWDON."

The second read as follows:

"CASTLETON, June —, 18—.

"DEAR MISS GLOVER:—If you feel that you can ever love me with one half the ardour and intensity that I do you, please acknowledge the sweet truth by accepting the pearls, and wearing them at Mrs. Harcourt's reception this evening."

"CECIL DAINTREE."

And these two missives were the source of the quandary into which Muriel Glover, the acknowledged belle of Castleton, had so naturally and insensibly fallen. Cecil Daintree was of the

firm of Daintree & Son, dry-goods merchants, while Mark Rawdon was simply a salaried clerk in the establishment of the aforesaid firm. The young men were of about the same age, both intellectual, well educated, and good looking. They had been classmates at the same university, and young Rawdon owed his present position in the establishment to the influence of his friend, Cecil. Both were madly in love with Muriel Glover, the beautiful orphan niece of the wealthy and aristocratic Mrs. Harcourt, who had come to reside at Castleton after the death of her husband, who was reputed to be worth a million. Mrs. Harcourt was still of a marriageable age, being but a trifle over forty, and remarkably healthy and young looking. Mr. Harcourt had left his property equally divided between herself and step-son.

Muriel was the only child of an elder sister, who had died some years before, leaving her offspring to Mrs. Harcourt's care.

Her father had left some property, which her mother, through tact and economy, had very materially increased, so that at the time of her death, Muriel was left quite an heiress—having an unincumbered farm, and some thousand pounds at interest. Neither of the young men had concealed from the other his passion for Muriel Glover; and reasoning between themselves that she could make but one of the two happy in a matrimonial sense, they had jointly hit upon the above novel method of ascertaining which of the two might claim her preference, each promising to abide by the young lady's decision, without harbouring the slightest enmity or ill-will against the other.

In their social intercourse, she had shown no especial preference for one more than the other. Their visits and attentions had hitherto seemed equally welcome to the young lady, and they were now both anxious to know which was in the future to be the favoured one.

Muriel had read both of the notes carefully, and was now deeply pondering. They had evidently brought the young girl to a profound sense of reflection, and she saw that she must decide between the two.

Cecil Daintree, aside from his personal attractions, had abundant prospective wealth to recommend him; while Mark Rawdon had only his intellect, beauty, and fine physical powers to plead for him.

With almost unlimited means at his command, the former could place her in the most exalted position in society, while the latter, with no other resource than his salary, could only expect to support a wife comfortably, not ostentatiously.

"Well," said Mrs. Harcourt, after a somewhat lengthy silence, "you seem to be unusually reserved on the subject of your morning's correspondence. Can't you see that your good aunt is dying with curiosity to learn the contents of the notes?"

Muriel looked up confusedly.

"Will you read them?" she asked, "or shall I?"

"You read them, deary. You see I am busy just now with this embroidery pattern."

Muriel obeyed, reading aloud what we have already submitted to the reader.

"What am I to do?" she questioned, with a look of evident annoyance, although it was plain from the blush that accompanied it, that she felt not a little flattered.

"Why, you silly little innocent," replied Mrs. Harcourt, laughing; "it is against all rules of propriety to keep two strings to your bow after they have become so importunate. The only thing you have to do is to consider the respective claims of these two daring aspirants, and decide between them. The choice cannot be very difficult, of course, when you consider their relative positions in a worldly sense."

"I know, Cecil is rich and Mark is poor."

"Yes; and the former is certainly not greatly inferior to the latter in point of manliness and intelligence. Of course, you will discard the rose for the pearls!"

"I am not sure, aunty dear. I have been pondering the matter deeply for the last five minutes. I have always prided myself that I am something of a judge of human nature. To be sure, Cecil Daintree is rich, and can lavish

pearls or even diamonds upon the lady of his choice; but in my knight of the white rose I recognise a natural superiority that wealth alone cannot confer. My decision, aunty, ought not to be governed wholly by the present situation; for riches, you know, have wings; and, aside from that, I find in my poor admirer more sincerity, more strength of purpose, and a great deal less vanity and selfishness than may be found wrapped up in him who is represented by pearls."

"Surely you would not be so insane, my dear, as to resign Cecil Daintree, with his prospective wealth and recognised social standing, for a poor clerk in his employ, with nothing but his good looks to recommend him!"

"I might, aunty. A young girl is sometimes supposed to consult her heart rather than her ambition in these matters; and, surely, if I follow my heart to have a voice, it will plead most potently in favour of Mark."

"Well, I have no power to control your decision," responded Mrs. Harcourt, somewhat impatiently. "I can only advise you, as I think, for the best. You are, of course, your own mistress; but as you make your bed, so must you expect to lie."

There was but little more said upon the subject, and that night Muriel Glover wore the white rose instead of the pearls. Cecil knew of his disappointment in time to send in his excuses to Mrs. Harcourt, for Muriel had returned his present, with an appropriate declination, early in the afternoon.

Indeed, Cecil had privately flattered himself that the preference would be awarded to him, in consideration of his wealth and high social standing; and to be thus set aside for one so greatly inferior in a worldly point of view, was a source of deep chagrin and mortification to the young man.

Mark Rawdon, on the contrary, was in an ecstasy of happiness at sight of the simple white rose so modestly displayed upon the heaving bosom of the fond object of his heart's worship; and he found opportunity in the course of the evening to draw her into the conservatory, beyond the reach of listeners, where he poured into her willing ear the passionate story of his love, and described how feeble, until that hour, had ever been his hope of winning such an exalted prize.

"I could not afford such a costly present as Cecil sent you," he whispered, softly, "and, therefore, I had scarcely dared to hope. Had I not loved you so wildly, so madly, I should have hardly ventured to make the bold proposition to you that I did."

"I thought it a model of manly delicacy and cleverness," responded Muriel, blushing, and permitting him to squeeze her hand in a most demonstrative manner.

"I felt myself very much in the condition of a drowning man," said Mark, in a tone of happy triumph. "The faint hope I had of winning you from such a rival as Cecil, was the straw, figuratively speaking, at which I grasped, and, lo! it buoyed me up, and I gained the haven of my desires. Oh, Muriel, darling, you don't know how happy your sweet promise has made me!"

"You know, Mark," said Muriel, quietly, "that I have always aimed to be a sensible and steady-minded girl. When I chose you, dearest, I did not do it without reflection. In the first place, I was fully sensible that I loved you the best—that there was more, in fact, worth loving in your character than in Cecil's. He would be much more selfish and exacting with a wife, and far less self-sacrificing than you; besides, I have been made acquainted with some things that do not reflect credit upon his character. For instance, I have heard, on very good authority, that he sometimes drank more than was good for him; that he preferred associating with gamblers and roughs, to sober, honest young men of his own age—a class whom that pet characterize as 'old-fashioned'—and I have often heard it whispered that he, too, indulges in the pernicious habit of gaming. Considering these defects, the intrinsic worth of your character—for I have been assured by those who know, that your record is a spotless one—weighs more in my humble, womanly estimation, than all the wealth of the world asso-



ciated with a tarnished name. I reasoned that Cecil, with habits of recklessness and extravagance already formed, though rich and courted now, might be poor, despised, and degraded at no distant day; and then what would a loving, proud-spirited woman have to live for? I duly considered all these things, as well as my decided preference for you; and the result was, though contrary to my good aunt's advice, who had not the faculty, as she said, to discover any of these bugbears, I accepted the rose in preference to the pearl."

"Bless you, darling!" cried Mark, deeply impressed by the sensible discrimination of his promised bride. "If I ever disappoint you in your hopes or expectations regarding me, it will be because I lack the ability, not the will, to sustain the rôle I have marked out."

"I have the most perfect confidence in your ability, dear Mark; and to show you that I have I shall place every shilling of my little fortune—some three thousand in all, if the farm can be disposed of to advantage—entirely at your command, which will enable you to commence business on your own account—not so extensive as the Daintrees to begin with, of course; but you will prosper. The man I marry is not to be cramped in his aspirations on account of my fears for the money I might have lying idle in some savings bank."

The lover could only express his emotion of gratitude by a tender pressure of the hand as they strolled back, and once more mingled with the gay company.

The next morning Muriel informed her aunt, Mrs. Harcourt, that she and Mark Rawdon were to be married at the end of a month, and preparations for the approaching nuptials were immediately set on foot.

Everything was in readiness when the time arrived, and a very costly display was the legitimate result of Mrs. Harcourt's clever management.

Agreeable to the promise given him before marriage, Mrs. Rawdon surrendered all her property into her husband's hands, and he immediately set up for himself in a limited way in the same line of business as the Daintrees.

As Muriel had prophesied before their marriage his business grew, and its growth proved a healthy and profitable one. In five years, Muriel's three thousand pounds had multiplied to twenty-five, and Mark Rawdon was beginning to be spoken of as one of the "heavy men," of Castleton.

But during that five years a great change had come over the fortunes of Cecil Daintree.

His father had died, leaving him in full control of his extensive business. For a while things seemed to go on as smoothly as ever with Cecil, though prudent people observed that he was becoming daily more fond of the wine cup and the disreputable company of fast men and professional gamblers. He let his business go at loose ends, trusting to the integrity of the salesmen he employed, and they robbed him. He spent much of his time in the city, and a rumour reached Castleton one day that he had lost five thousand pounds at faro in one night—nearly twice the amount of money that Mark Rawdon had had to commence business upon.

From this time, Cecil Daintree became more reckless and dissipated than ever, and cautious people began to whisper of impending bankruptcy; and, sure enough, it came sooner than the most observant had predicted. An officer from the city arrived one day and seized upon everything. He had been running his business for a long time on the strength of a credit which his father had established for the house through his business tact and integrity.

The next morning after that ruinous, and to some unexpected, failure, Cecil Daintree was found suspended by the neck to a great beam in his own barn, and quite dead when discovered. Muriel Rawdon had just received a call from her aunt, Mrs. Harcourt, when the sad news of the suicide reached them.

"Where should I have been now, had I accepted the pearls?" was all that Muriel said.

"Indeed, deary, you were wiser than I, after all," confessed Mrs. Harcourt with a sigh.

## FROM OVER THE SEA.

—20—

(Continued from page 441.)

"I would never wish it," said Owen, kindly. "Will you accept the use of the Priory for a year, or until I have been able to have the Dower House made ready for you? Will you let things be as though it were my own mother I was planning for, and your daughters were my sisters?"

"But I have no claim on you," she answered, "you might think I had joined in deserting you all these years—but I never knew."

Owen took her hand.

"Conversations like these are always painful," he said, gently; "let us settle things now, and not have to open the subject again. If you will stay here until Marshlands is ready I shall be grateful to you, and if you consider it enough I will pay over to you half the income of the estate all your life."

"You could never keep up this place on the remainder, and, indeed, I want very little, and you may marry."

"I shall marry, I hope, next year; but my uncle intends making a handsome settlement on my wife, and he means to allow me a large income, so I hope you will consent to my proposal, and try not to think me a usurper."

Loveday looked up tearfully.

"I think papa would like it, mother. Don't you see it will make things as they would have been if we had had a brother of our own, and if Owen will only forgive Cynthia's unkindness, we might all be happy here yet."

Owen took his little sister's hand.

"Indeed all that I ask is that you should try and look on me as a friend, not as a stranger who has come from over the sea to rob you of your home."

## CHAPTER VII. AND LAST.

A YEAR had passed since the Squire's death, and August had come again; on the lawn at Marshlands sat Loveday and her mother. Lady Katherine still wore widow's weeds, but Loveday's mourning had been lightened; there was no crepe on her pretty black dress, and her fair face had regained its sunshine, though just now there was a touch of wistfulness in her voice as she said—

"I wish Cynthia would give up the strife and call on Hilda, don't you, mother?"

For there had been two marriages in the Bright family that year. Cynthia, unable to find anyone willing to conduct her case, had reluctantly been convinced that her half-brother must be left to enjoy the inheritance; she always spoke of him as the "usurper," she utterly refused to live at Marshlands, or share the very liberal income he had settled on her mother, and so in many ways it came as a relief to Lady Katherine when the wilful, haughty girl married a man much older than her late father, and went to live in state at her husband's splendid home.

The Duke of Eversley was seventy; he had children and grand-children, but he was able to settle five thousand a year on his second wife, and his Duchess took precedence over all the other county ladies, and so as Cynthia had never believed in love perhaps she was content.

Just three months' later Owen Bright brought home his bride, and pretty Hilda charmed all hearts; her sister Ethel was staying with her, and the rumour in the county was that Lord Marchmont hoped to make her his viscountess, Loveday hoped it might be true. Miss Fanthorpe was a charming girl, who seemed to like the viscount.

The Duchess of Eversley held aloof from the Priory, positively refusing to call on Mrs. Bright, and refusing all invitations to places where she thought she might meet her; but Loveday and her mother welcomed the bride with affectionate warmth, and would never let any one in their presence blame the changes at the Priory.

For the beautiful old place, though as carefully

kept up as ever, seemed to have changed its whole character.

The park was no longer sacred to deer, and (once a year) the Greenheath Sunday School. All clergymen for miles round knew Mr. Bright would lend his grounds for any charitable purpose, and Milltown invalids were wheeled there by friends or relatives on warm summer nights to enjoy the beautiful country, while Owen always welcomed the Ainslies as his oldest friends, never hesitating to allude to them as his relations.

A "terrible Radical" most people called young Mr. Bright; but that did not hinder his being the most popular man in Middleshire.

Loveday met the Ainslies at the Priory, and after a hint that Lady Katherine would be pleased to see her, the kind-hearted mistress of Milltown House came to Marshlands; where the gentle, sweet-faced widow received her with a grace, which made her declare to her stepson afterwards "there never was anyone like Lady Katherine;" and now, after a year of friendship, a rumour was wafted over to Marshlands that Denis Ainslie was going to Australia.

"It can't be true," said Loveday, indignantly that very August afternoon, when she had regretted that Cynthia would not call on Hilda Bright. "Why, his father and mother have no one else in the world. He could not leave them."

"Here he comes," said Lady Katherine, as she turned to go into the house, "so you will be able to ask him."

"Going to Australia?" repeated Denis, as the first greetings over, Loveday put her first question. "No, I don't think I am."

"But the report is all over the place."

"My father and I don't often have a difference of opinion," said Denis, with a strange smile; "but there is one point on which we never can agree; and I believe when he had crossed me a little more than usual I was so undutiful as to say 'it was enough to make me go to Australia.' He took it in serious earnest, dear old man, and the report is everywhere."

"And what did he want you to do?" demanded Loveday, then blushing crimson. "I beg your pardon, I ought not to have asked."

"But I should like to tell you. He keeps reminding me that I am very nearly thirty, and wants me to follow my cousin Owen's example and find a wife."

"Oh!"

And Loveday decided at once she did not want to see a Mrs. Denis Ainslie.

"Now it so happens," said Denis, in a strange far-off tone, "there is nothing I should like better than to please my father, only I have fixed my affections on one particular woman, and if she will not have me I shall never marry."

"Did you tell Mr. Ainslie so?"

"No; he would have been quite capable of going to her, and asking her to take pity on me; and I want love—not pity."

Then came a long silence. Loveday would not break it. Only Denis saw the eyes which had met his so bravely were now fixed on the ground.

"Loveday, what is it to be—child, can you love me? I know what you will urge—your father; but, dear, he is now where all things are made clear. I love you with all my heart, and if you can love me back again I am sure he would not wish to part us."

"I don't think he would; and I have loved you always, ever since you saved my life."

"I hardly did that, sweetheart."

"Yes, you did. If you hadn't found me I should have been killed in the storm. Oh, Denis, what will your father say?"

"That I have 'waited' to some purpose. He and mother love you dearly, Loveday; and I do believe Lady Katherine likes me!"

"She does indeed."

"There's one person who will forbid the banns," said Denis, comically. "The Duchess will renounce you for ever, Loveday, if you marry me."

"I'll risk that, Denis. Cynthia has never seemed really to belong to us since—"

Ainslie finished the sentence for her.

"Since the heir of Greenheath came 'FROM OVER THE SEA!'"

THE END.

## FACETIÆ.

BUFF: "How is your rheumatism getting along?" Gruff: "On crutches."

"What's the name of your new boat?" "I named it 'Bridget,' after the cook, because it makes such heavy rolls."

THE hammock doesn't look unlike a fishing net. Hence its suitability, in a way, for a nice perch and an occasional flounder.

"Yes, I have a position in a powder-mill now." "Well, stick to it, old fellow. You may have a chance to rise some day."

ELSON: "What are you writing now?" Arthur: "A book on the 'Pleasures of Matrimony.'" Elson: "Gad! you must have a powerful imagination!"

BERNARD: "Why are you sad, Mabel darling?" Mabel: "I was just thinking, dearest, that this was the last evening we could be together until to-morrow."

CHAFFY: "I weally beleave I will study languages, doncherknow." Miss James: "How perfectly delightful! You will commence with the English language, of course?"

NEVERPAY: "Say, old boy, lend me thirteen dollars." Eyetooth: "Well—um—I don't know about that." Neverpay: "Superstitions, eh? Well, make it twelve."

WYKOFF: "Dear me! Old fellow, how came you so dreadfully hoarse?" Raykoff: "Adawerigg the blabed fools that ask be how I caught this cold. Good-boddigg."

HE: "I shall never marry until I meet a woman who is my directopposite." She (encouragingly): "Well, Mr. Duffer, there are numbers of bright, intelligent girls in this neighbourhood."

HE: "Now that our little quarrel is made up, I should ask you to take a good cigar if you were a man." She: "And if you were a woman, I should ask you to join me in a good cry."

"How do you like your new music-master?" "He is a very nice, polite young man. When I made a mistake yesterday, he said: 'Pray, mademoiselle, why do you take so much pains to improve upon Beethoven!'"

MISS BUTER: "Newspaper work takes in almost everything, doesn't it?" Spacer (moving up closer to her): "Well, yes, our profession does embrace a great deal." Then the light got so nervous it went out.

SERGEANT (to recruit who has trodden heavily on his foot on alighting from the horizontal bar): "It is all very well, Atkins, your trying to tread in my footsteps, but you ought, at least, to wait till I have cleared out."

MISS DUKKETS: "Did you tell Mr. Getthere I was not in?" Bridget: "I did, mum." Miss Dukkets: "What did he say?" Bridget: "He said, 'Well, tell her to come down as soon as she is in.' He's in the parlour."

SHE: "I love to hear Colonel Blowhard tell of his war experiences. By the way, what side was he on?" He: "The other side." "A Confederate?" "No; he was on the other side of the Atlantic at the time."

GERMAN PROFESSOR OF MUSIC: "I am very sorry to see, Mees Fanny, dot you takes so much troubles." Pupil: "Oh, not at all." Professor: "Yes, you do takes so many troubles to play does notes vich are not dat music book in."

FOND mother (listening to the baby's cries): "What a sweet-toned voice she has, dear! She will be a splendid singer. We must send her to Italy and have her voice cultivated." Brutal father (trying to sleep): "Send her now."

PUTTING IT GENTLY: "No, marquis, I would be unable to make you happy." "Vy weel you always perseest to underestimate yourself!" "Well, you see, I've been brought up to forget that I am a millionaire's only daughter."

MIFFERS: "Talk about strong constitutions, my neighbour Whiffers beats anyone I ever saw." Differs: "That man! You must be daft. He's been bedridden for ten years." Miffers: "Yes, but he's tried all the known remedies for his disease and he's alive yet."

MR. HAMMER: "What I want to know is whether I am barred from membership in your club just because I am an actor?" "Most certainly not, sir. The club men have all seen you on the stage and voted unanimously that you are not an actor."

IN COURT (a burglary case): "Yes, gentlemen of the jury," urged the prisoner's counsel, "not only ought my client to be acquitted, but he should be paid the five hundred pounds offered by the safe-maker to anyone able to force open one of his strong boxes."

CHAWLIE: "What is the mattah with poor Harwy? I heah that he is weally in a dangerous state." Gawge: "He is twuly. He is a terwibly sensitive chap, doncher know? He called on his girl the othah evening, and she was so chilly that Harwy took the pneumonia. I nevah knew a saddah case."

"WILLIAM, my son, I am glad to hear from your school-master that you are progressing with your studies. Now, tell me what is the Latin for—well, let me see, for woman?" "Mulier, father." "Oh, mulier is it? Well, I never had your advantages; but I should say you were about right, for your dear mother gets mule-ier every day."

FAIR PATRON: "See here! You told me a horrid story about the way my husband was acting, and I've found, on investigation, that it is not true. He's just as good as can be." Fortune-Teller: "Very remarkable, madam, very remarkable. I've told that same story to about ten thousand different women, and you are the first one who has made a complaint."

"I SHOULD so like to have a coin dated the year of my birth," said a maiden lady of uncertain age to a male acquaintance. "Do you think you could get one for me?" "I am afraid not," he replied. "These very old coins are only to be found in valuable collections." And yet he cannot see why, when he met the lady next day, she didn't speak to him.

"YIS, Mrs. Muggins, Pat and Oi part to mate no more. Oi want to the hospital to ax after him. 'Oi want to see me husband,' says I—'the man that got blowed up.' 'Yez can't,' says the docthor; 'he's under the infloence of Ann Esthetic's.' 'Oi don't know the lady,' says Oi, mighty dignified-loike; 'but if me lawful wedded husband kin act loike that when he's at dith's door, Oi'll have a divorce from him!'"

CALLER: "Why are you waving your handkerchief so wildly?" Murilla: "Since papa has forbidden Jack the house, we have arranged a code of signals." Caller: "What is it?" Murilla: "When he waves his handkerchief five times that means, 'Do you love me?' and when I wave frantically in reply, it means, 'Yes, darling.'" Caller: "And how do you ask other questions?" Murilla: "We don't. That's the whole code."

APPROPOS of the lawyers pitching into experts on the witness-stand in murder-trials, the case is recalled where the lawyer looked quizzically at the doctor who was testifying and said, "Doctors sometimes make mistakes, don't they?" "The same as lawyers," was the reply. "But doctors' mistakes are buried six feet under ground," said the lawyer. "Yes," said the doctor; "and lawyers' mistakes sometimes swing six feet in the air."

HE was calling on a young lady and had been talking against time for several hours, not noticing that she was, to say the least, slightly wearied. "Do you know," he said, after completing a monologue of several thousand words, and thinking a little flattery would be appreciated, "while talking to-night, I have felt as if I were inspired by one of the Muses. And which one do you think it is?" He looked searchingly into her beautiful face. The modest blush for which he was watching proved to be a wide yawn, which grew wider as she answered: "I guess the Muse that inspires you to-night must be Euterpa." He didn't really know anything about mythology, so he couldn't tell just what she meant. But when he got home he took down his Webster's Unabridged, and there in cold type, staring him in the face, he saw: "Euterpa—the Muse who presided over wind instruments."

A GREEN old age is all right. It's the green young age that's dangerous.

"WELL, Tommy," said the visitor, "how do you like your baby brother?" "Oh, lots and lots—only I don't think he's very bright!" "Why not?" "We've had him nearly two weeks now, and he hasn't said a word to anybody."

GEORGE HARD: "We shall have to be very economical this year, Mary." Mrs. H. (enthusiastically): "Yes. I intend making my own hats, bonnets and dresses and—". George (in rapture): "Mary, you are a prize! Yes; a perfect treasure!" Mary (continuing): "And your shirts and collars and cuffs." George (in abject terror): "Mary, I was only making fun with you. We shall not have to be as economical as all that!"

A LADY in Hong Kong engaged a Chinese cook. When the celestial came, among other things she asked his name. "My name," said the Chinaman, smiling, "is Wang Hang Ho." "Oh, I can't remember all that," said the lady. "I will call you John." Next morning when John came up to get his orders he smiled all over, and looking inquiringly at his mistress, asked: "What is your name?" "My name is Mrs. Melville Langdon." "Me no memble all that," said John. "Chinaman he no savey Mrs. Membul Landon—I call you Tommy."

AN amusing story, at the expense of one of Mr. Spurgeon's theological students, is told apropos of the great preacher's habit of sending the students into the pulpit, without any previous preparation, to preach from a text which they would find written on a slip of paper. One day a small man, with no gift for ready speaking, entered the pulpit, and opened the paper, finding the rather dismaying text, "Zaccheus." He began with evident embarrassment: "My brethren, Zaccheus was a little man"—a long pause; then—"so am I." Another long pause. "Zaccheus was up a tree. So am I."

"I HAVEN'T seen your wife out lately, Mr. Goodheart." "No, she keeps at home these days." "Is she ailing?" "No. The fact of the matter is, a week ago I took home two of the handsomest bonnets I could find in town, and told her she might have her choice between them. She has been busy day and night ever since trying to make up her mind, and was as undecided as ever when I came away this morning." "You ought to help her out of her dilemma." "How can I?" "Why, take one of them and carry it back to the shop. That will be the one she'll want."

IN one of the kindergartens the teacher was endeavouring to familiarise the children with the words "cold" and "hot" at sight without spelling them by letters. When she asked them what they would get if they went out of doors in winter without their coats, and pointed at the word, they caught the cue at once, and answered "cold" instantly. But "hot" proved a puzzler for a moment. "Now, Mary," said the teacher to the little girl in the end seat, "suppose you were standing right close up in front of a tremendously big fire, just flaming and flaring and burning and blazing away, what would you get?" "I'd get right away from there," replied the child in a matter of fact tone that upset the instructor for the afternoon.

THERE is a popular man who is more or less disturbed every day in his office by visitors; and though he is naturally amiable, it is beginning to tell on him. The other night, after he had been asleep about three hours his wife shook him into semi-consciousness. "Wha-what is it, my dear?" he asked, sleepily. "Sh-sh George," she whispered, "there's a burglar downstairs." "How do you know?" he enquired, still half asleep. "I heard him moving around, and—oh, George, there he is now! Listen!" and she gave him another shake desperately. George turned over into an enaier position. "Well, dear," he growled, "don't disturb him. This is his busy time and he ought to be given a chance to attend to business occasionally anyhow." Then he began to snore and his wife listened and listened and finally went to sleep.



## SOCIETY.

LADY volunteers are to be the novelty of the future.

As a nation England employs more women than any other Government.

EX-QUEEN ISABELLA always signs her name Ysabella, and not Isabella, as is generally supposed.

The Court will stay in Scotland until the middle of November.

THE Queen's reign wants only three years and fifty days to be the longest of any English sovereign.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will return to Sandringham early in October.

THE visit of the King and Queen of Denmark and Prince Waldemar did wonders for her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, and helped her through a most trying time as nothing else could have done.

THE Duke of York likes wild ditties as well as sea songs, and he can sing as many of Dibdin's ocean melodies as any jolly British sailor can.

It is said that the Duchess of York learnt the typewriter some years ago in order to assist her mother with her correspondence.

THE famous diamond coronet comb which Louis XIV. gave to Mme. de Montespan, after all its wanderings and strange experiences, has at last fallen into the hands of Mrs. William Waldorf Astor. She wore it recently in her hair at the Queen's Drawing-Room.

QUEEN MARGHERITA is an expert climber, and she finds the exercise and the fine clear air of the Alps most invigorating; but she, too, is somewhat venturesome, and has a way of trying to disperse, as far as possible, with the services of professional guides.

QUEEN VICTORIA's idea was a pretty one when she gave the Princess Victoria Mary of Teck a white enamel brooch, fashioned as a rose, on her birthday. The emblem is one specially dear to the Duke of York, and we are told how, when quite a little boy, playing at "History Games" with the Duke of Clarence, he always sided with the Yorkists, and declared that, if ever he had a title, "York" it was to be.

THE Empress Frederick has not seen the Emperor William since she left Berlin for England at the end of January. Her Majesty intends to spend two months of next winter at Rome, and she has taken the Farnese Palace, on the right bank of the Tiber, which is famous for its magnificent frescoes.

THE new ladies' walking-stick will probably be met with before long. The stick has the appearance of an umbrella rolled extremely tight, and slender to a degree. The handle, in ebony or light walnut, with a gold band is convenient to hold. Nothing, indeed, could be smarter. Many women who love walking with a support forego the pleasure because of the mannish look of the ordinary stick. The mock umbrella changes all this. It has, moreover, the advantage of being as light as a feather.

THE Kyrle Society, have put forth an appeal to those who still possess flags which were used for decorative purposes in honour of the happy event of the 6th ult. It reminds us that flags are continually in request for the humble festivals of the poor in the less favoured districts of London. "Industrial exhibitions, openings of playgrounds and gardens, boys' and girls' club festivals, and flower shows," are mentioned as examples of the objects to which the superfluous flags might be worthily devoted; and it is to be hoped that the appeal will meet with a wide response.

THE Duke of Connaught is to be away from Portsmouth on leave of absence during September and October. H.R.H. is to spend the greater part of September in Hungary, and the Duchess will go either to Wiesbaden or to Aix-les-Bains, while the children are to accompany the Queen to Balmoral. The Duke and Duchess will proceed to Abergeldie Castle when they return to England, and are then to reside there until they go back to Portsmouth on the 31st of October.

## STATISTICS.

OVER 300,000 people dwell in boats in Canton. ONE smoker contracts diphtheria to three non-smokers.

ABOUT 400,000,000 pounds of soap are used every year in Great Britain.

THE death rate in the army is lower than it is among civilians by about 3 per 1000.

SIXTEEN ounces of gold are sufficient to gild a wire that would encircle the earth.

## GEMS.

HYPOCRISY is the ready homage that vice pays to virtue.

No book that will not improve by repeated readings deserves to be read at all.

WHILE in all things that we see or do we are to desire perfection and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner thing in its narrow accomplishment above the nobler thing in its mighty progress.

Do not become the slave of habits, not even of good habits. For good habits become bad ones when long persisted in. "Broadly considered, change which brings about an alteration of vital action, is the sole curative principle in disease, whether accomplished by fresh scenes, unaccustomed diet, altered habits, or drugs. As a conservator of health, too, it is pre-eminent."

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**COCOANUT TABLET.**—Two lbs. white sugar, one teacup water, one small cocoanut grated; peel the brown skin from the cocoanut and grate it finely. Put the sugar and water on to boil for about five minutes, stirring all the time. Then add the grated cocoanut and boil for a few minutes longer, until some dropped on cold water becomes a little firm when taken in the fingers. Stir it a few times off the fire, and pour in a greased tin, and it will be hard in a short time.

**POTTED VEAL.**—Take 2 lbs. veal and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of nice ham, and cut all the flesh from the bones of the veal in nice slices and put it aside. Put on the bones with four breakfast cups water, or a little more, to boil for four hours at least, add to them some nutmeg and pepper and cayenne, then strain the bones. Cut the veal and ham into nice small slices. Put this on with the boilings of the bones to boil about one-and-a-half hours or two hours slowly. Season to taste, and put in shapes to get cold.

**POTATO SALAD.**—Use boiled potatoes of good flavour and even size, either hot or cold, as preferred. After they are peeled and cut in even slices, arrange them in a salad bowl with one mild onion peeled and sliced thin, to six medium-sized potatoes. Sometimes a little chopped parsley is added to the salad. A plain salad dressing is used for potato salad, the proportion being one-fourth of vinegar to three-fourths of oil, and a palatable seasoning of salt and pepper. Pour the dressing over the salad and keep it in a cool place until it is wanted for the table.

**TO BOTTLE PLUMS.**—Prick the skins with a needle, make a syrup with  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. sugar and two breakfast cups water. When the sugar melts put in the plums and let them heat very slowly and simmer a few minutes, not more than five. Put the plums in bottles and pour the syrup over, then cork.—Another way: The fruit should be perfect and dry, fill bottles with it. Then boil sugar in the proportion of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. sugar to 1½ breakfast cups water. Pour this into the bottles. Then put the bottles in a pot of cold water with a cloth in the bottom. Let it come to boiling point. Take out the bottles and cork.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE humming-bird of the West Indies is less than an inch long.

It is said that bees, wasps, and hornets are powerless to sting a person when he holds his breath.

LONGFELLOW was six months in correcting and cutting down a poem which took him four weeks to compose.

IN Heligoland Sabbath begins at 6 p.m. on Saturday, when the church bell is tolled, and ends on Sunday at the same hour. Formerly no vessel could leave port between those hours.

IN the year 1547 a proclamation was issued by Henry VIII. commanding "that women should not meet together to babble and talk, and that all men should keep their wives in their houses."

THE first Royal yacht on record was called *Esneeca*; anglicised, *The Snake*. She belonged to King Henry I., and was then commanded by Hugh de Bek.

MANY a good book has been written in prison. Socrates, Cervantes, Bunyan, Defoe, Lovelace, Tasso, Beranger, Raleigh, and James Montgomery all continued their literary labours while suffering from a curtailment of liberty.

IN India and other Oriental countries the profession of serpent charming is said to be hereditary. The charmer possesses a power beyond that of other men of knowing when he is within close proximity to a concealed reptile.

PERSIAN newspapers are not printed from type. When the reading matter is ready it is passed to a scribe, who makes a clean copy. From this a beautifully written fine copy is made by a hand-writing expert, and this is finally exactly reproduced by lithography.

THE Icelandic Sagas contain the earliest allusion to the distinctive character of the Highland dress. They relate how Magnus Olafson, King of Norway, and his followers, when they returned from ravaging the west coast of Scotland, went about bare-legged, having short kilts and upper wraps, and so men called him "Bare-legs." This was in 1093.

IN Spain, once upon a time, no man might ride a horse which the King had mounted. One day when Philip IV. was going to church in a procession, the Duke of Modena offered to present him with a beautiful steed belonging to him, and accounted the finest in Madrid, but the King declined the gift, saying he should regret to render so noble an animal ever after valueless.

SIAMESE girls are the most graceful in the world. Their joints are very supple, and a part of their education is made up of bending their joints backwards and forwards to make them so. They are all short-haired, and when young they are plump and as straight as the palm trees of their own beautiful land. As they grow older they become wrinkled and ugly, and most of them ruin their teeth by chewing the betel. Only very few of them are educated.

NATURALISTS say that birds build their nests according to the character of the season that is coming. If it is to be rainy, they build in a sheltered position; if windy, they thatch straw and leaves on the inside of the nest, between the twigs and the lining; if very windy, they take extra care to bind their nest firmly to the bough with pliant twigs. But if the season promises to be a fair and pleasant one, they build in an open position, without taking any of these special precautions.

It is very curious to read in an old Roman history of the prices paid for slaves in the palmy days of the Empire. As a general thing, a labourer could be bought for about £16 of our money, but after a province had been conquered or a great victory won, hundreds would sometimes be bought for £1 or £2 each. After the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the price of slaves fell to about sixteen shillings. Skilled labourers and artisans brought more. A gardener was worth about £60, a blacksmith £140, a good cook often brought £500, an actor or actress, £1000, and a physician, £2000.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**Y. Z.**—The year 1900 will not be leap year.

**T. R.**—The standard varies in different districts.

**NELL.**—Cold salt-water baths are of great benefit.

**ROSINA WYKIE.**—The 19th of March, 1862, fell on a Wednesday, and October 16th, 1874, on a Thursday.

**FAY.**—There is nothing known that can do what you ask.

**OSMOND.**—Farthings are not legal tender for any sum above 6d.

**HERBERT.**—Unless you stated your object fully it would be impossible for us to help you.

**ANDREW.**—Only a lawyer could advise you how to proceed.

**LESLEY.**—It is not a title, it is the man's baptismal name.

**J. S.**—The applicant's proficiency is tested when he makes application.

**ABBOTT.**—The document should have a 6d. stamp to make it a binding agreement.

**MANFIELD.**—Thirty persons have committed suicide on the Eiffel Tower.

**QUERIST.**—In days when hanging was common, murder occurred daily.

**CLARA.**—You must apply to the Infirmary, where you will be treated free of charge.

**PERCIVAL.**—Clergymen come next in number to mechanics under the head of inventors.

**MILLICENT.**—Twenty-one is the age at which a person can legally marry without parents' consent.

**PHEBE.**—The marriage can legally take place in the name you have always borne.

**INQUISITIVE.**—The best authorities have decided that steam is visible.

**YOUNG MOTHER.**—The soft white and yellow leghorns are still popular here for little girls.

**KATE KEARNEY.**—Rapid growth of the finger nails is considered to indicate good health.

**GORDON.**—You had better try and make terms with your present landlord. It is no use going to law.

**FREDERICK.**—You can legally reclaim a lost dog without giving compensation to the finder.

**IGNORANT.**—About twenty minutes is the usual time for the gentlemen to remain in the dining-room.

**BENTON.**—If they trespass on your garden you may sue the owner for damages.

**LIZZIE.**—In pronouncing the word mandolin, the accent is on the first syllable (man-do-lin).

**BARTON.**—All cups and glasses used for liquors at a licensed house must be of imperial measure.

**IN TROUBLE.**—Once in, she cannot get out till the doctors say it is quite safe to let her go.

**BUSY WIFE.**—Fanny leaves spread among furs and woollen articles will protect them from moths.

**L. G.**—The idea that hedgehogs suck the milk from cows is a silly and unfounded superstition.

**ETRIQUETTE.**—The host goes first with the lady of highest rank, the hostess last with the most distinguished gentleman guest.

**BELLWOOD.**—Post Office employees make a declaration of secrecy in regard to all matters in relation to their duty.

**A FIVE YEARS' READER.**—Italians do not use black cloth, white being used in the case of a child and purple velvet in the case of adults.

**A CONSTANT READER.**—There are females employed in prisons as assistant matrons and female assistant warders in local prisons.

**ELLA.**—You need have no hesitation in making such a change in your name; it would not be necessary to register it.

**HAL.**—The parents cannot oblige a son of sixteen to live at home, so long as he maintains himself elsewhere.

**INDIGNANT.**—Perhaps the simplest thing to do is to lay all the facts before a magistrate, and act upon his advice.

**ROBERT S.**—If the debt has not been owing more than six years, we should think that you could be made to pay it.

**B. A.**—"Hoodlum" comes from the German *Audler*, meaning a loafer or idler; so "bummer," from the German *bummler*, a word of similar import.

**EVAN.**—A man's debts do not "die with him"; his legal representatives are liable so far as they have any property left by the deceased.

**WEARIED ONE.**—If you cannot make your business succeed by strict application and fair-dealing, then be advised—give it up in time.

**HOBLY STRONG.**—Your nerves will be much better without beer and tobacco. What you chiefly require is plenty of outdoor exercise.

**LINDA.**—Fresh air, good plain food, plenty of exercise, regular habits, cold baths, &c., are the most likely means of removing the spots.

**A. K. T.**—We fear that you cannot get the medals back. Your only chance is to lay the facts before a magistrate, and ask his help.

**INQUIRER.**—Cincinnati is a great railway centre, and, next to Chicago, is probably the most enterprising and successful city in the States.

**MARCUS.**—The water in the Bois de Boulogne is condemned upon authority. No soldier is, under any circumstances, to drink it.

**DICK.**—The craze for jubilee coins has died out completely; you will just get 20s. for your sovereign, not one penny more, we assure you.

**JOHN BULL.**—The Scotch form of taking the oath by uplifting the hand, instead of kissing the book, is admitted in the English courts.

**ELLIS.**—Your writing is very careless. Take pains in the formation of every letter. When you master the form, then you can put on speed.

**DONOVAN.**—You must give twenty-one days' notice, and you must be married at the church of the parish in which you or the lady reside.

**HUBERT.**—If cheques have two parallel lines drawn across them, with or without the addition of the words "and Co.," they will only be paid by a banker.

**FARRANT.**—All terms of penal servitude are (subject to good behaviour) reduced by one-fourth in the case of males, and one-third in the case of females.

## THE WAY WE WALKED.

I MET A WOMAN ON life's way,  
A woman fair to see;  
Or caught up with her, I should say,  
Or she caught up with me.  
"The way is long when one's alone,"  
I said, "and dangerous, too;  
I'll help you by each stumbling stone,  
If I may walk with you."

I saw her hang her head and blush,  
And I could plainly see  
The fire that caused the fevered flush;  
I whispered, "Walk with me,  
Thou art of all the very mad.  
A brave heart wants to woo,  
And I'll remember long," I said,  
"The way I walk with you."

Then on we went; her laughing eyes  
And sunny smiles were sweet;  
Above us blue and burnished skies,  
And roses'neath our feet.  
"I'm glad your sunny face I've seen,"  
I said, "When life is through,  
I'll own the best of it has been  
The way I walked with you."

And on we went; we watched the day  
Into the darkness merge;  
My fair companion paused to say,  
"Here's where our paths diverge."  
I answered, "Yes, and one more mile  
Is fading from our view,  
And all the while lit by your smile  
This way I've walked with you."

"I do not say my love, my life,  
Will all be given to grief  
When you are gone; the senseless strife  
Will bring me no relief.  
When death's cold hand the curtain draws,  
When life's long journey's through,  
I'll not have all been bad, because  
I came part way with you."

C. W.

**S. P. W. R. K.**—Without further evidence you would find great difficulty in gaining your case. As to costs, no one could say—cases vary so much. Consult a Solicitor.

**A REGULAR READER.**—The necessary thing is to so impress their minds with the beauty of cleanliness that they will neither tolerate nor seek after any other condition.

**JENNIFER.**—Oilcloth cannot be saved from cracking when exposed to the sun. Any desired colour in ground paint mixed with boiled linseed-oil will renew the surface when worn or cracked.

**ADELA.**—It is not remarkable to find very young persons with gray hair. It is in such cases usually inherited or constitutional, and there seems to be no remedy.

**LOYAL TOM.**—Should the Prince of Wales ascend the throne, his son Prince George, if then living, would probably be created Prince of Wales; but he would not succeed to the title by right.

**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—There is no universal rule; but the man is usually discharged through the prison where he was incarcerated before and after trial; journey is at country's expense, of course.

**GLADYS.**—"Paste diamonds" are artificial diamonds made of what is known as "French paste," a mixture of glass and oxide of lead. Real diamonds are very successfully imitated by the use of this material.

**IN GREAT TROUBLE.**—You may summon your husband for deserting you, but so long as he remains abroad he would be beyond the jurisdiction of an English Court. You cannot compel your husband to give up the custody of his daughter.

**ELLIOTT.**—The registrar on receiving notice of a death is bound to give the necessary certificate for burial without fee or reward. The usual fee for a subsequent copy of the certificate is 2s. 6d.

**DOT.**—To remove grease spots from a white cashmere dress, scrape upon the spots enough French chalk to completely cover them, lay over the chalk a piece of brown paper, and press it over with a hot iron.

**JACKIE.**—An out-going tenant is entitled to remove all fruit or vegetables in a condition fit for consumption. Unless by consent he must not move trees or plants, although set by himself.

**C. R.**—To apply for and to accept the appointment is merely a somewhat roundabout, but the only official means of vacating a seat in the House of Commons. The appointment is resigned as soon as it is accepted.

**SUBSCRIBER.**—Kensington is said to have derived its name from Princess Kenna, only daughter of Oberon and of his wife Titania, the King and Queen of the English fairies.

**R. D.**—The three longest reigns in English history, prior to the present, have been—Edward III., fifty years; Henry III., fifty-six years; George III., fifty-nine years. As Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, she has so far reigned fifty-six years.

**AN OLD READER.**—Some titles are what are called life peerages—that is to say, they are conferred on the individual, but upon the condition that they are not to descend to children; in ordinary cases the title descends to male issue, and becomes extinct when there are no males in the family to take it up.

**SUSANNA.**—After it has been washed or dyed and is dry, pull the fronds of the feather between the thumb and the edge of a table knife before the fire, shaking the feather frequently as you proceed; in effect, comb the feather with the knife, holding your thumb against it as you do so.

**REDWOOD.**—As in the process of galvanizing, iron is first pickled in warm diluted sulphuric or hydrochloric acid, and fumes are thereby given off which are hurtful to human health, the process is one that would fall under the prohibition requiring the manufacture to be kept at least at nearest 500 yards of a village or town.

**HATFIELD.**—The freehold property would go to the eldest son if there was no will to the contrary effect, and the widow only enjoy its possession by consent of that son. If a will was found thirty years after the death of the testator, it would be for the Court of Chancery to say what action should be taken under it.

**DECIMA.**—If all are well acquainted with each other the familiarities to which you refer are almost inseparable from the games themselves; but no well-bred young lady or gentleman will take advantage of any such occasion to transgress the rules which govern good society everywhere—whether on a lawn or in a drawing-room.

**BLONDE.**—If it proceeds merely from dryness of the scalp, a little glycerine and rain-water may be rubbed into the roots of the hair two or three times a week. Many forms of dandruff are caused by a disease of the scalp; ordinary remedies therefore would be valueless. To treat such a case intelligently, one must have a knowledge of the causes and conditions of the trouble.

**HARRIETT.**—Strong vinegar and the gall of an ox mixed together and rubbed in the joints of a bedstead and cracks where the vermin lurk will kill them; or boil glue and vinegar together, rub as above, and that will destroy them; to prevent them coming again, take strong vinegar and mix with salt, then sprinkle the room with it; it will prevent both bugs and fleas, and is very wholesome in houses.

**MINNIE.**—Sea-water is apt to make the hair brittle, and increase any tendency to dandruff, while it strengthens the tendency to greyness. It is best, if possible, to wear a bathing-cap, as, of course, it is necessary to dip the head in order to prevent the blood rushing to it, owing to the shock of cold water. If the hair has become wet with the sea water it should be rinsed through in fresh soft water after returning home.

**BAB.**—Epsom dates back to Saxon times, owing its name to Ebba, who built a residence there which was known as Ebbesheim. From this original the name changed to Ebbisham, then to Eb's-ham, and finally to Epsom, at which it has since remained. It was about the end of the seventeenth century that Epsom began to rival Bath and Tunbridge Wells as a fashionable resort. The old well-house where Pepps drank his "four pints of the water" was pulled down in 1804.

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